HAMAS SUICIDE TERRORISM:
A LAST RESORT

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ABSTRACT

There are numerous explanations that attempt to convey why a person, specifically a Palestinian, makes the choice to resort to suicide terrorism. Suicide terrorism, a prevalent occurrence in the Middle East and beyond, can be attributed to many factors including: political, psychological, and religious grievances or issues. In this thesis I will use secondary sources to draw on the numerous examples of suicide terrorism that have been conducted by Hamas, arguing how a key political issue, the Israeli occupation of Palestine, enables certain Palestinians to rationalize and resort to suicide terrorism as a viable solution to their issue. Much of the analysis will come from the beliefs and thoughts of former and present members of Hamas. Interviews and video recordings of Hamas suicide terrorists before their deaths, as well as statements by the leadership of Hamas and average Palestinians will be at the forefront of the analysis. The thesis will conclude that political factors are by far the most significant cause of suicide terrorism, especially in the Arab-Israeli conflict. With the understanding that political issues are at the forefront of Hamas’s agenda, it stands to reason that Israel can and should formulate better foreign policies aimed at creating a lasting peace in the Middle East.
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CHAPTER I

SUICIDE TERRORISM

Introduction

There are an abundance of explanations that attempt to convey why a person makes the decision to end his life, not to mention the lives of others, by resorting to suicide terrorism. A widespread phenomenon in the Middle East and beyond, suicide terrorism can be attributed to many influences including: political, psychological, and religious grievances or issues. This thesis will examine how the major political issues surrounding the Arab-Israeli conflict allowed certain Palestinians to justify and select suicide terrorism as the best possible option to fight against or attempt to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

I will draw on numerous examples from former and present members of Hamas, arguing how the terror and occupation many Palestinians experienced at the hands of the Israelis drove some of them to commit such despicable acts of suicide terrorism.¹ The thesis will display how the continued growth of Israeli settlements, targeted Palestinian assassinations, unwarranted arrests, Israeli human rights abuses directed towards innocent Palestinian people, and the never-ending grasp of the Israeli occupation influenced some Palestinians, specifically the members of Hamas, to the

¹ Hamas has been the governing party in the Gaza Strip since 2006, and it conducts operations principally throughout the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of Palestine. The organization continues to completely reject the state of Israel, due to its occupation of the Palestinian homeland, and it previously used, up until 2008, arguably, the only difference-making weapon it had—the suicide bomber—in an effort to support the Palestinian cause. Due to its prior usage of suicide terrorism to liberate Palestine and its unwillingness to recognize Israel, with a preference to eliminate Israel all together, it is considered a terrorist organization by much of the world including the U.S. and Israel.
point of no return, suicide terrorism. It will clearly articulate why a group, such as Hamas, can orchestrate such devastating and ruthless attacks of suicide terrorism against innocent Israeli civilians.

The Israelis prevent the Palestinians from traveling freely throughout their homeland, implement curfews upon them, and deny them an ability to have a functioning economy. This unwarranted and excessively violent and restrictive occupation imposed against the Palestinians by the Israelis allows one to understand why Hamas resorts to and justifies its terroristic behavior. This thesis will explain how the Israelis have forced the Palestinians under their occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since 1967.² It will display how the Palestinians and Arabs view Israel as the one who resorts to illegitimate acts of violence against its people. The Palestinians believe that the Israelis are terrorizing their citizens via home invasions, targeted assassinations, unwarranted arrests, and excessive violence. The Hamas suicide attacks were a reaction and response to the sense of hopelessness and powerlessness that most Palestinians felt because of the stranglehold placed upon them by the Israelis. The Hamas aligned Palestinians felt that they had very few options and as a last resort used their bodies as weapons aimed at ending the occupation or destroying Israel.³

In order to fully understand the political motivation behind the suicide attacks,³

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detailed accounts of a sampling of the Palestinian suicide attacks, going back to the First Intifada and up until the most recent suicide attack in 2008, will be presented and analyzed in detail throughout this thesis. It will conclude that political factors are by far the most significant cause of suicide terrorism, especially in the Arab-Israeli conflict. With the understanding that political issues are at the forefront of Hamas’s agenda, it stands to reason that Israel can and should formulate better foreign policies aimed at creating a lasting peace in the Middle East.

_Terrorism Defined_

Before attempting to understand the motivation and rationale behind suicide terrorism, one must understand the general purpose of terrorism. In order to understand its purpose it must be defined. Unfortunately, there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. For the purpose of this thesis, terrorism can be defined as “Premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.” This definition gives a vivid description of the method of terrorism implemented by Hamas and directed towards Israel. Terrorism uses violence in order to intimidate and frighten the target audience, and experts universally agree that all terrorist groups are perceived to be weaker than their enemies, and that “… they

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4 The Intifada was an uprising of the Palestinian people against the Israeli occupation of Palestine from 1987-1993. It was a Palestinian mass movement of resistance to rebel against Israeli occupation policies, and it led to the prolonged closure of the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, preventive detentions, Palestinian deportations, house demolitions, travel restrictions, and other forms of punishment forced upon the Palestinians by the Israelis.

are prepared deliberately to murder noncombatants in furtherance of their objectives.”

It also displays how “… the adoption of terrorism as a tactic to effect political change is, therefore, a deliberate choice.”

Suicide Terrorism Defined

Suicide terrorism is one such reaction or response to the horrific state of oppression inflicted by Israel’s occupation of Palestine. Just as terrorism has many definitions, there are various parameters of suicide terrorism that must be discussed before an acceptable definition can be applied to the specific situation at hand. This can be done by exploring previous outbursts of violence or terrorist attacks resulting in the death of the assailant and drawing conclusions.

For example, was Ibrahim Hasuna, the man who, in March 2002, sprayed automatic gunfire at customers who sat in the Tel Aviv Seafood Market restaurant and did not cease firing until he was overpowered, a suicide terrorist? Or should Baruch Goldstein, the man who performed a similar act of unrestrained killing of Muslims praying in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron some nine years earlier, also be classified as a suicide terrorist?

These questions are up for debate, because both attackers did not actually commit the act of suicide during their attacks. They were both almost certainly willing to die, since they murdered scores of innocent people and left themselves no logical escape, but their violent acts differed from acts such as the woman who while waiting in line for a concert in Moscow detonated an explosives belt in a large group of people or the

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7 Richardson, *The Roots of Terrorism*, 2.

terrorist who drove a carload of explosives into a recruitment office building for the new Iraqi army.\textsuperscript{9} All of the incidents mentioned above are undoubtedly ‘terrorist attacks’, but the first pair of examples involving the shootings in Tel Aviv and Hebron is referred to as a ‘suicide mission’, while the second pair of examples involving the bombings is referred to as the classic model and is called a ‘suicide attack’.\textsuperscript{10} The major difference is that the person on the ‘suicide mission’ is not actually killing himself although he does not expect to survive the attack, whereas the person conducting the classical form of ‘suicide attack’ certainly knows he won’t survive the attack, if all goes according to plan, as he is committing an act that includes blowing himself up.\textsuperscript{11} Most researchers refer to all of these terrorists as suicide terrorists, and I tend to agree with them, but for data purposes the research in this thesis will only count suicide attacks that meet the classic definition, because it is the common understanding of the term and also because suicide missions are a challenge to reliably identify.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Key Examples of Suicide Terrorism}

Suicide terrorism, as defined in this thesis and consistent with the type utilized by Hamas, first occurred on October 23, 1983, when a Lebanese volunteer who was a member of Hezbollah crashed a truck fully loaded with explosives into a compound at Beirut International Airport in Lebanon that was being used as a temporary

\textsuperscript{9} Pedahzur, \textit{Suicide Terrorism}, 8.

\textsuperscript{10} Pape, \textit{Dying To Win}, 9.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 10.
headquarters by the U.S. Marines.\textsuperscript{13} The suicide attack killed 241 U.S. Marines.\textsuperscript{14} This Beirut Airport bombing came shortly after a similar suicide truck bombing conducted by a member of Islamic Jihad against the U.S. embassy in West Beirut on April 18, 1983, which resulted in the deaths of 49 people.\textsuperscript{15} Both of these suicide attacks, most especially the attack on the barracks, led to a complete reevaluation of U.S. military involvement in Lebanon and resulted in the early 1984 withdrawal of U.S. and French troops deployed in Lebanon to stabilize and contain growing sectarian violence.\textsuperscript{16} In the eyes of members of Hezbollah, the attacks were an incredible success since the U.S. and French militaries both pulled out their troops, thus ending the occupation of Lebanon. A few successful examples, such as the previously mentioned bombings in Lebanon, help to explain the rationale behind Hamas’s utilization of suicidal terror tactics pitted against Israel. The mindset being if suicide terrorism was a success in Lebanon why can’t the Palestinians expel the Israeli occupiers from their land in the same way?

In 1993, nearing the conclusion of the First Intifada, Hamas conducted what is arguably considered its first suicide terrorism operation by sending a suicide bomber in


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15} Pedahzur, \textit{Suicide Terrorism}, 46-47.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 48-49.
a car filled with explosives directed to target Israeli civilians.\textsuperscript{17} The suicide bombing resulted in the killing of an innocent Israeli bystander as well as the suicide terrorist who drove the car. The attack also left eight other people injured. This suicide attack marked the beginning of a new form of Palestinian warfare aimed at either eliminating the occupation of Palestine or resulting in the destruction of Israel.\textsuperscript{18} Either result would prove to be a favorable solution for Hamas, since it would provide that the Palestinians get their land back as well as their freedom. In order to liberate itself from Israeli occupation, Hamas chose to implement suicide terrorism as a key tactic since it was the most effective, and arguably, the only weapon in its arsenal that could bring success to its mission.\textsuperscript{19}

Throughout the entire Arab-Israeli conflict, this threat of suicide terrorism has and will continue to remain relevant unless Israel changes some of its policies directed towards Palestine. Before I present and analyze the Hamas orchestrated suicide attacks in chapters three and four, I will first provide an extensive description and background on the Hamas organization as well as the events that transpired leading up to and including the First Intifada.

\textsuperscript{17} Matthew Levitt, \textit{Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad}, (New Haven: Yale University Press), 11-12.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

The Hamas Suicide Bomber and the Utilization of Suicide Terrorism

The purpose of this thesis will be to specifically analyze a sub-category of this phenomenon, notably the Hamas suicide bomber who is unquestionably considered a suicide terrorist. Discussing the boundaries of suicide terrorism is important, but it is even more essential to try and define it. As opposed to just terrorism, “… suicide terrorism is an act of violence that kills the attacker in addition to bystanders, but it also spreads fear of terrorist organizations to those left unharmed.”20 Suicide terrorism is “… the most aggressive form of terrorism, pursuing coercion even at the expense of angering not only the target community but neutral audiences as well.”21 Another characteristic of this brand of terrorism is that the attacker does not expect to survive the mission, implementing attack methods such as the car bomb or suicide vest.22

The minimum definition perceives suicide terrorism as a diversity of actions that necessitate the death of the terrorist in order to ensure the success of the action. In a slightly expanded definition, Mia Bloom adds that the terrorist executes the action in order to achieve a political goal and with the complete awareness that he is going to his death. Another definition proposed by the same scholar stresses the tactical aspect: that is, unlike other terrorists, a suicide terrorist blows himself up together with his victims. The broadest or maximum definition focuses on the goals of suicide terrorism and states that the suicide attacker’s intention is to cause harm to as many people as possible (in most cases these are civilians), and with the ultimate purpose of effecting some type of political change. However, its real intention is to create an atmosphere of terror amidst a population not necessarily exposed directly to the incident, but rather those who are informed about it from a secondary source.23

20 Pedahzur, Suicide Terrorism, 10.

21 Pape, Dying To Win, 9.

22 Ibid, 10.

23 Pedahzur, Suicide Terrorism, 10.
“As the terrorists perceive it, public pressure in the wake of this collective anxiety should be translated into political gains.”24 By considering the boundaries and definitions of terrorism and suicide terrorism, it allows one to better understand how an organization, such as Hamas, or an individual person might justify or rationalize suicide terrorism as the best, and possibly the only, solution to combat an unwanted political situation such as the occupation of one’s land.

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24 Ibid., 11.
CHAPTER II

HAMAS

Development of Hamas

Prevalent throughout much of the 1990s, and even up until this very day, crowded buses, bus stops, restaurants, and shopping malls have all been prime targets of suicide attackers, all of which have been carried out by numerous Palestinian liberation groups, with Hamas being at the forefront of the attacks by conducting the most suicide attacks resulting in the most casualties.¹ This strategy of suicide bombing directed at Israel by Hamas during the Arab-Israeli conflict resulted in 540 fatalities and 3,268 wounded victims from 1994 to 2008.² Since Hamas perpetrated more suicide attacks against the Israelis than any of the other Palestinian liberation groups, it is the ideal group to analyze and examine allowing one to understand the organization’s rationale for committing these suicide attacks in response to Israel’s occupation of Palestine.³

Hamas, which means ‘zeal’ in Arabic, emerged in the Gaza Strip at the beginning of the Intifada as the underground armed wing of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood in the Israeli occupied territories, but its roots were fortified in Palestine.


² Ibid. Please keep in mind these statistics only account for Hamas suicide attacks. The statistics do not include other Palestinian terrorist group attacks or those that are not considered to be suicide attacks.

long before 1987 when the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood first made contact in Palestine in 1935.\(^4\) The first major presence of the aforementioned Brothers occurred when the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood took note of the Palestinian plight and decided to support the Palestinian people during the Great Palestine Revolt in 1936, eventually resulting in the establishment of the first Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1945.\(^5\) The initial presence of the Brothers helped set the stage for the eventual creation and establishment of Hamas. Prior to the creation of Hamas, the primary activities of the Muslim Brotherhood included charity work, mosque building, school building, the mobilization of the Muslim people, and the consolidation of the Muslim faith.\(^6\) The Muslim Brotherhood also mobilized popular support for the Palestinian cause by writing letters of protest to the British authorities who held partial control of Palestine under the British Mandate.\(^7\) Another example of support for the Muslim Brotherhood came on the occasion of the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, which established a home in Palestine for the Jewish people, when the Brotherhood

\(^4\) Scham and Abu-Irshaid, “Ideological Rigidity and Political Flexibility,” http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr224.html. The Muslim Brotherhood accounts for most of the present-day fundamentalist politico-religious Islamic groups in the Middle East and elsewhere. It is a Sunni group established by Sheikh Hassan al-Banna in Egypt in 1928, and it proved to be a strong inspiration for anti-Western feelings in the region. The Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was officially established later in 1945, and following the outbreak of the 1987 Intifada, it transformed itself into the militant group Hamas.


\(^7\) Ibid., 13.
expressed to the British ambassador in Egypt that “the cause of Palestine is the cause of every Muslim.” The Brotherhood warned Britain that if suppressed sentiments were to be unleashed “England would lose the friendship of the Islamic world forever … we therefore hope that the British government will wake up to this fact before it is too late despite all the deception practiced by the Jews.”8 This was the first time the Muslim Brotherhood’s reach expanded beyond the borders of Egypt, and it helped grow the Brotherhood exponentially throughout Palestine, especially in the three years leading up to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.9 The Brotherhood’s support attempted to rid Palestine of British forces, and most significantly, it denied the legitimacy of recent Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Unfortunately, for Palestine, the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, known by Israel as its War of Independence, ended in defeat and the unoccupied parts of Palestine were divided between Jordanian control in the West Bank and Egyptian control in the Gaza Strip.10 This split greatly weakened the Brotherhood in Palestine and forced both groups to move in opposite directions. It also allowed the more popular leftist and nationalist groups, such as the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to continue to dominate Palestinian

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9 Ibid., 17.
politics up until the late 1980s.11 The Brothers in the Gaza Strip took on a revolutionary and militaristic campaign after the defeat of the 1948 War, while the Brothers in the West Bank followed a political, educational, and proselytizing approach that was in line with Jordanian policy.12 This was quite a significant difference, and it allowed the Brothers in the Gaza Strip to continue to be active in the Palestinian national cause targeted at ending the Israeli occupation, while the Brotherhood avoided a violent confrontation with Israel and engaged in the building of mosques, the mobilization of the Muslim people, and the consolidation of the Muslim faith.13 Throughout the 1950s, the group in Gaza was much more effective than the group in the West Bank, especially when it came to resisting Israeli occupation and liberating Palestine which were essentially the main objectives of the Brotherhood’s platform.14 The group in Gaza was initially more successful because of the increased independence it enjoyed compared to the Brotherhood in the West Bank.15 The Gaza branch of the Muslim Brotherhood “… emerged as the foremost political movement in the Gaza Strip until 1955.” But, towards the end of 1954, Gamal Abdel Nasser outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt after the Brotherhood attempted to

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13 Ibid., 23.

14 Ibid., 25.

15 Ibid., 23.
assassinate him. 16 This caused debilitating problems for the Brothers in Palestine. The organization became much more passive, essentially going underground, which allowed for the formation of a secular nationalist organization called the Palestine National Liberation Movement or Fatah. 17 In the struggle to liberate Palestine from Israel, Fatah adopted a policy of securing support from Arab countries, while the Brotherhood avoided direct resistance to Israel, at least for the most part, throughout much of the 1960s. Just a few years after Fatah split from the Muslim Brotherhood, Fatah, rather than the Brotherhood began to “… clearly embody the aspirations of the Palestinian people for liberation and enjoyed popular legitimacy for championing the national cause and engaging in armed struggle.” 18 This was due to its willingness to resist Israel as opposed to the more passive response implemented by the Palestinian Brotherhood.

A shocking and incredibly unfavorable outcome to the 1967 War, for the Arab nations, changed the mindset of most Palestinians drastically. Since the Arab armies were soundly defeated by the Israeli forces, the Palestinian stance on Fatah changed, because dependence on Arab armies was a critical component of Fatah’s strategy aimed at resisting Israel. 19 After the Arab armies were quickly decimated by Israeli


17 Ibid., 17.

18 Hroub, HAMAS: Political Thought and Practice, 20.

19 Ibid., 29.
forces the Palestinian belief in Fatah was stymied a bit. The results of the 1967 War also permanently changed the landscape of the Middle East, as Israel recorded a decisive victory capturing the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria.\textsuperscript{20} These lands have always been a major point of contention between the Arabs, Palestinians, and Israelis ever since they were captured by the Israelis in the 1967 War. This is largely due to the issue of Israeli settlements, which I will discuss in greater detail later. With such substantial casualty, land, and military losses by the Arabs combined with a growing reluctance from Palestinians to support Fatah, this unfortunate development presented the Palestinian Brotherhood with an opportunity to continue to garner support in a different way. It was able to continue to successfully build mosques and to “… mobilize, unite, reorient, and consolidate the faith of a new generation so as to prepare it for the confrontation with Zionism.”\textsuperscript{21} Despite the serious political and strategic cost to the Brotherhood of avoiding resistance activities aimed at Israel, its persistent effort during the 1970s to shape a new generation proved invaluable to its cause. The years from 1967 to 1975 represented the phase of mosque building, and the second half of the 1970s through the late 1980s was called the phase of social institution building with the mobilization of high school and university students and the formation of Islamic student societies, clubs, and charitable societies.

\textsuperscript{20} Milton-Edwards and Hinchcliffe, \textit{Conflicts in the Middle East Since 1945}, 15-16.

\textsuperscript{21} Hroub, \textit{HAMAS: Political Thought and Practice}, 30.
that became meeting points for the new Islamic youth.²² Laying this social and institutional groundwork, while implementing non-violent resistance throughout the decades preceding and including the 1980s, the Palestinian Brotherhood was helping to pave the way for the eventual formation of Hamas in late 1987.

Before Hamas officially formed in 1987 another offshoot of the Palestinian Brotherhood formed at the beginning of the 1980s. It was called Islamic Jihad, and it moved in its own direction, because it protested the Brotherhood’s inability to take direct action against the Israeli occupation.²³ The new group did not have to forsake its Islamic identity, since it forged a partnership between Islam and violence, as it embraced armed resistance in response to Israel’s occupation.²⁴ Islamic Jihad cells pursued military action, targeted collaborators, gathered intelligence, and created an infrastructure for arms storage under the leadership of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin.²⁵ However, in 1984, Sheikh Yassin and some of his colleagues were arrested and found guilty, by an Israeli military court, of plotting to destroy the State of Israel.²⁶ His arrest created a critical dilemma for the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood’s leadership was conflicted on whether its priorities and resources should be directed toward social

²² Hroub, HAMAS: Political Thought and Practice, 31.
²³ Ibid., 32.
²⁴ Ibid.
²⁵ Ibid., 34.
²⁶ Tamimi, HAMAS: A History From Within, 46.
change and Islamic reform or toward the liberation of Palestine. It chose the latter in order to ensure that it would no longer lose its members to Islamic Jihad, as well as to strengthen and fortify the group’s organizational interests. The Brotherhood would clearly falter without Sheikh Yassin’s leadership and the support of groups like Islamic Jihad, which were ready to engage Israeli forces in response to the occupation.

According to the scholar Khaled Hroub, Islamic Jihad’s military action was perceived by the Muslim Brotherhood as the indirect result of the lengthy process of preparation previously undertaken by the Brotherhood over the past few decades leading to a radical shift in ideology and to the Brotherhood’s political stance in the mid-1980s, as the organization decided to embrace armed resistance towards Israel.27 The years 1984 through 1987 were considered the “… period of building up a new confrontational perspective.”28 Scholar Zaki Chehab recounted an interview with Sheikh Yassin, regarding the development and strategy of his movement in four, clearly defined stages, in the passage below:

The first phase was to build its institutions; charities and social committees which would open their doors to young and old—anyone who could play a role in resisting the occupier. This was a prelude to their confrontation with the Israeli enemy in the Intifada which, according to Sheikh Yassin, was instigated single-handedly by Hamas, without the involvement of other Palestinian factions. The second phase worked on strengthening the roots of the resistance within every household in the West Bank and Gaza, and to bolster its political credibility. The third stage developed its military capabilities from rudimentary

27 Hroub, HAMAS: Political Thought and Practice, 34.

28 Ibid.
stone-throwing and launching Molotov cocktails, to using guns, hand grenades, and other explosives. “Anything which would give the Israelis sleepless nights,” he said. The final stage was to see Hamas moving beyond the Palestinian dimension and establish a dialogue with its Arab and Islamic neighbours. Because, he said, “our enemy needs confrontation from a stronger force and to have interaction backing is important for us.” Yassin announced that the Palestinian cause “had gone beyond the slogans of the PLO,” which reminded Arab and Islamic states that they should support the Palestinian cause, while cautioning them to leave the Palestinians to make their own decisions. While Arafat was adamant that they should remain independent of outside interference, Hamas thought this policy foolhardy, arguing that the Palestinian cause is also an Arab and Islamic cause.29

This new line of strategy, adopted in a major decision by the leadership of the Brotherhood in Palestine in the summer of 1985 “… called on all members of the Brotherhood wherever they may be in occupied Palestine, to take part in demonstrations against, and clashes with, the enemy occupying [our land] and even to organize such demonstrations and clashes.”30 It resulted in Islamic Jihad and Palestinian Brotherhood cells, especially active in 1986 and 1987, carrying out armed attacks and operations such as planting explosives, firing on Israeli patrols, and liquidating Israeli agents.31 Led by Sheikh Yassin, who would later become the founding father and spiritual leader of Hamas, the Brotherhood’s military actions were helping to set the stage for the eventual creation of the Hamas organization in late 1987.


30 Ibid., 35.

The Formation of Hamas

HAMAS, an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Resistance Movement), was officially established in the midst of the Palestinian Intifada on December 14, 1987. The group was formed in order to resist the Zionist occupation of Israel and to establish an Islamic Palestinian state. The resistance movement presently receives funding from Palestinian expatriates, Iran, and private benefactors in Saudi Arabia and other moderate Arab states. The group is also currently considered a terrorist organization by much of the Western world, because it has utilized suicide terrorism in the past, as well as rockets and mortars that it has fired at Israel, as key weapons aimed at either ending the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank or completely destroying the state of Israel. According to the Hamas charter, on the organization’s website, the official mission of Hamas is, as part of the resistance movement against the Zionist occupation of Palestinian lands, which has been ongoing since the British occupation:

To contribute in the effort of liberating Palestine and restoring the rights of the Palestinian people under the sacred Islamic teachings of the Holy Quran, the Sunna (traditions) of Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the traditions of Muslims rulers and scholars noted for their piety and dedication.

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In order to meet this goal Hamas works to: “Evoke the spirit of Jihad (resistance) amongst Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims; Defend Palestinians and their land against the Zionist occupation and its aggression; and Liberate Palestinians and the land usurped by the Zionist occupation forces and settlers.” Hamas’s goals are targeted directly against Israel, because of its concept of Zionism that further influences its policies of placing settlements on Palestinian land in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Zionism is the national revival movement of the Jewish people, “… a political movement that sought the return of the Jewish people to their historical homeland.” The movement was primarily a response to the increased anti-Semitism in Europe, as well as the outcome of growing nationalist consciousness. “It sought to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine through international guarantees that would facilitate the ‘return of the Jews’ to the Holy Land through the migration of Jews from the Diaspora, or Aliya.” This attempt to create a homeland in Palestine has obviously been incredibly problematic, because it was already inhabited by the Palestinians. Zionism helped foster an Israeli policy of settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip which, not surprisingly, induced a violent reaction from the Palestinians and resulted in extreme violence and countless suicide attacks over the years. The people of Palestine rose up against Israel in an attempt to get their rights and their land back. The Palestinians did this by attempting to thwart: Israel’s targeted assassinations on its

leaders, its ever-expanding settlement policy, and its collective punishment and repression via the occupation. This was an uprising of the Palestinian people in response to Israel’s aggression and unfair policies enacted against the Palestinians. “The Palestinian resistance will never stop and the Palestinian people are determined to regain their legitimate rights.”

Several major developments precipitated the Intifada such as: the Israeli invasion and eviction of the PLO from Lebanon in 1982 and its shift from military to political action, the decreasing Arab interest in the Palestinian cause, and the escalating socio-economic and political pressures created by the conditions of the Israeli occupation. These egregious and horrific circumstances unmistakably violated the human rights of the Palestinian people and eventually escalated the situation in Palestine to its boiling point. Throughout 1987 a few more incidents occurred that seemed to directly lead up to the First Intifada in Palestine. One of these incidents was when some Islamic Jihad members escaped from a Gaza prison and then raided Israeli patrols and soldiers, eventually resulting in the deaths of four of the escapees after they were ambushed by the Israelis. Things worsened after the Israeli Defense Force’s attack on the Islamic University in Gaza where thousands of students had gathered for a prayer vigil for the four escapees killed in the previously mentioned attack. This

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36 Hroub, HAMAS: Political Thought and Practice, 36.
prayer vigil turned violent when Israeli forces opened fire on and wounded dozens of innocent students attending the vigil. Shortly after this a member of Islamic Jihad stabbed to death an Israeli settler on December 6th. This led to an assumed Israeli retaliation when an Israeli truck ran over and killed four Palestinian workers and injured another nine.\textsuperscript{37} Mass demonstrations broke out in Jabaliya, the town where three of the workers originated from, and spread throughout Palestine where public anger and outrage had been escalating for some time. It culminated with the beginning of the Intifada on December 8, 1987. On the following day, taking note of the previous day’s incident, and the public reaction to it, members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine determined that this situation presented the right set of circumstances to translate their new conviction into practice and they assigned top priority to the confrontation with the Israeli occupation.\textsuperscript{38} Sheikh Yassin described the birth of the Hamas movement in a confession with Israeli investigators in Gaza Central prison.

Two months before the start of the Intifada in December 1987, I met with Sheikh Salah Al Shehada to whom I was first introduced in Al Majdel prison. I had decided to establish a movement in Gaza to work against the Israeli settlement policy, resist the occupation and to encourage Palestinians to take part in the resistance effort against Israel. During our meeting we agreed to set up a military wing and a security wing of this new Islamic movement. The military wing was to fight against the Israeli army and its occupation. Salah Al Shehada built up this wing. The aim was to amass weapons to use in the struggle. The security wing was to monitor and arrest Palestinian informants as well as drug dealers, prostitutes and the sale and consumption of alcohol in the Palestinian Territories.

\textsuperscript{37} Hroub, 	extit{HAMAS: Political Thought and Practice}, 39.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 36.
In early December 1987, I organized a group of people to discuss the movement. There was Sheikh Salah Shehada, forty years old from Beit Hanoun working at the Islamic University in Gaza; Issa Al Nasshaar, a forty-five-year-old engineer from Rafiah; Dr. Ibrahim Al Yazuri, a forty-five-year-old GP from Gaza; Dr. Abdul Aziz Al Rantisi, a forty-year-old GP from Khan Younis; Abdul Fattah Dokhan, a headmaster from Al Nusairat camp; and Mohammed Shamhaa, a fifty-year-old schoolteacher from Al Shati camp. During this meeting we agreed to call the movement HAMAS, an acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement. Each one of us would be responsible for the areas in which we lived. I was to be the head of the Hamas organization in the Gaza Strip.39

**Hamas Rises Up During the First Intifada**

The first statement from Hamas was written and distributed throughout Palestine over the next few days and those individuals mentioned above, who were present at the meeting, became the founders of Hamas.40 Hamas would, from this day forward, be dedicated to freeing Palestine from the grip of Israel’s occupation through armed resistance.

To better understand how the Intifada came to fruition, an interview with Rashad al-Shawwa, the mayor of Gaza at the time, went a long way to explain the situation quite succinctly in an interview broadcast on an Israeli radio station on December 10, 1987, the third day of the Intifada:

One must expect these things after twenty years of debilitating occupation. People have lost hope. They have turned to religious fundamentalism as their last hope. They have given up hoping Israel will give them their rights. The Arab states are unable to do anything, and they feel that the PLO, which is their representative, also has failed.41


An uprising of the Palestinian people was therefore bound to happen and when it finally occurred it came as no surprise.

With little outside support for the Palestinian cause and very little success in dealing with Israel in the past, the Palestinian people felt that they were out of options. The conditions surrounding the outbreak of the Intifada allowed the members of Hamas to utilize this opportunity, at this exact point in time, to dedicate themselves to the liberation of Palestine by means of armed resistance. The ideology is clearly articulated in a passage pulled from a Hamas pamphlet.

In the seventies there were many indications that the PLO may be prepared to accept a lesser settlement than is indicated in the Palestine National Charter. Then, in the eighties, following the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war, the Palestinian cause was marginalized at both the Arab and international levels … And the policies of the Zionist entity have become more obdurate and arrogant with the encouragement and support of the United States of America, which signed a strategic cooperation agreement [with Israel] in 1981. In this period, the Golan Heights have been annexed, Israel destroyed Iraq’s nuclear reactor, and it then invaded Lebanon and laid siege to Beirut in 1982, which constitutes the greatest insult to the Arab umma since the 1967 war … the Islamic movement in Palestine perceives a great challenge stemming from two factors:

First: The retreat of the Palestinian cause to the lower rung in the ladder of Arab priorities;

Second: The retreat of the Palestinian revolution [PLO] from pursuit of the strategy of armed struggle until Palestine is liberated to acceptance of the settlement that has been forced on the Palestinian people.

In the light of these two retreats and the accumulation of the negative effects of the tyrannical and repressive Zionist occupation of the Palestinian people inside Palestine, but not outside it, were ripe for resistance, there arose the need for a Palestinian solution based on Islamic jihad, the first manifestation of which are found in Usrat al-Jihad in 1981, and Sheikh Ahmad
Yassin’s group in 1983.42

In order to implement its resistance, Hamas, shortly after its formation in December of 1987, quickly resorted to extreme violence. This was evident when the group executed suspected collaborators and kidnapped and killed Israelis in order to establish its opposition to the state of Israel and its support for an Islamic Palestinian state.43 This reaction and uprising by Hamas, unexpected by the Israelis and the Palestinians alike, was provoked by Israel’s aggression and oppression towards ordinary Palestinian citizens over many years. It may not have been expected, but in the eyes of Hamas and many other Palestinians it was warranted.

In December 1987 the rains fell and a sense of gloom pervaded Palestinian towns and cities across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Every day thousands of Palestinian workers congregated long before daybreak to begin a commute in battered and overcrowded vans and cars to their menial jobs in Israel. Thousands of men with nothing more than a packet of cigarettes and a black plastic bag with pitta break and olives would travel to service Israel’s booming economy, while at home their wives and mothers would try and make meagre earnings stretch through yet another week of unrelenting poverty, hardship and occupation.44

The First Intifada was ignited by a tragic car accident when an Israeli driver crashed into some Palestinian cars that were returning home from a relentless day of work in Israel.45 The deaths of the Palestinian workers whose cars were hit aided in

42 Hroub, HAMAS: Political Thought and Practice, 37-38.


45 Ibid.
triggering the uprising as rumors circled around at their funerals. This angry rhetoric caused protests to break out in the Palestinian refugee camps, with citizens calling for revenge on Israeli soldiers.

The marches, protests, demonstrations, petrol bombs and stones were all directed at one target: the Israeli occupation. Within ten days of the accident, thousands of Palestinians had taken to the streets from refugee camps, cities, towns and the smallest hamlets to protest at the occupation … It appeared as if one mighty force was uniting the Palestinians, their desire to bring the Israeli occupation to an end through an unprecedented campaign of mass rebellion and civil disobedience. Thousands took to the streets, closed their shops, stayed away from work and scrawled graffiti condemning the ‘Zionists’ and urging the people to join in the Intifada.\(^{46}\)

Israel’s defense minister, Yitzhak Rabin, triggered international debate in the first weeks of the Intifada when he spoke of his ‘iron fist policy’ and stated, “… the first priority is to use force, might, beatings’ to restore order.”\(^ {47}\) Evidence of Rabin’s disregard for Palestinian human life was clearly demonstrated by the statistics that followed, indicating that by December 23, 1987, 21 Palestinians had been killed and 158 wounded, while according to Israeli officials only 31 Israeli soldiers had been wounded and none were killed.\(^ {48}\) Rabin vehemently defended the conduct of his soldiers, and his ‘iron fist policy,’ saying that Israel had to protect its ‘military rule’ in Gaza and the West Bank “… with all the means at our disposal within the framework of the law,” including curfews, closures, “… deportation and administrative detention


\(^{48}\) Ibid.
against the inciters and the organizers,” tear gas, and rubber bullets. Soldiers were then officially permitted “… to fire with the intention of wounding those leading the riots and throwing petrol bombs, initially at their legs, as far as this is possible and this only after shots in the air have also failed to disperse the rioters.”

Hamas insisted that it regarded the Intifada as a Muslim rebellion against the occupiers. “The Islamic Resistance Movement is the Palestinian’s national resistance movement, and we fight for Palestinian rights … our resistance is against the occupation of our country … Hamas also extends in the Muslim world,” said one of its early prominent figures, Musa Abu Marzouq. The objective of Hamas’s Islamic organization as issued in Communiqué number three stated:

Here is the voice of Islam, the voice of the Palestinian people in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the rest of the Palestinian land. Here is the voice of an erupting volcano … Objectives (short-term) – liberate the prisoners, reject colonialism, political exile and administrative detention, the barbaric practices against our civilian population and prisoners, the political ban on travel and harassment, the disgraceful expansionism, the corruption, subordination … end to all the taxes to the abominable occupation and all their supporters.

Objectives (long-term) – reject negotiated solutions, break with the deviations of Camp David, reject proposals for autonomy, reject the idea of an international conference, open the way for a permanent end to the occupation and liberate the homeland and the places to our holy saints which have been sullied and subject to profanity …. To achieve these efforts the people must redouble their activity.

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50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., 56.

52 Ibid., 70.
**The Transformation of Hamas**

By August of 1988 Hamas had transformed itself into much more than just a social welfare and religious party. While retaining these previous values, it began to become more of a militant and political party, vehemently opposed to the occupation of Palestine by Israel and prepared to fight for official statehood and recognition.\(^53\)

Even though Hamas had political aspirations at the time, it did not become an official political party in the region until 2006.\(^54\) The Hamas organization proclaimed Palestine to be an Islamic trust and declared a ‘jihad’ against the state of Israel.\(^55\)

Israel’s policy of mass arrests to control the Intifada resulted in tens of thousands of Palestinians being sent to prisons or ‘prison camps,’ hastily erected desert prisons, such as Ansar III in the Negev desert.\(^56\) The Palestinians were interned in overcrowded jails, often without trial or due process, as the Israelis swept through the occupied territories with the hope of detaining enough Palestinians so they could terminate the Intifada.\(^57\) “On June 18, 1989, Israel declared Hamas to be an illegal organization, and on October 16, 1991, Sheikh Yassin was convicted and given a life sentence for

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\(^{55}\) Kumaraswamy, *The A to Z of the Arab—Israeli Conflict*, 103.


\(^{57}\) Ibid., 51.
abducting and killing two Israeli soldiers.”

With Hamas leaders publicly identifying Israel and its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as the primary cause of Palestinian problems, Hamas launched a militant campaign opposing Israel and established a formal, separate military wing. It was named after the Muslim Brotherhood leader who conducted military campaigns in opposition to the British Mandate, Izz ad-Din al-Qassam. This armed wing would develop into one of the most potent and polarizing wings of the Hamas movement, but in later years it would also pull the group in a violent direction. After Sheikh Yassin’s arrest and the formation of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades in 1991, Hamas kidnapped an Israeli border police officer in December 1992 and attempted to make a deal with the Israelis, wanting to trade him for Sheikh Yassin. The Israelis refused and the soldier was executed. This execution of the Israeli border agent caused widespread outrage throughout Israel, and Israeli retribution against Hamas was swift and apparent, eventually resulting in the Israeli deportation of 415 suspected Hamas members to Lebanon, although, due to persistent international pressure, Israel eventually agreed to their return a year later. “Human rights organizations condemned the act as a mass deportation and a major violation of international law


59 Ibid.


which resulted in Israel’s reasoning to return the men a year later."62 One of the Palestinian men rounded up and deported by the Israelis recalled the events as follows:

It was very late at night. They took us on a bus and then another, but we were blindfolded and had no idea of our journey’s end. Of course our hands and feet were in plastic cuffs and there was no possibility of escape. After some hours they told us that our fate would soon be decided on the order of the Israeli court. There was more than one bus and we realized that there were many hundreds of us. It felt like a nakbah all over again. The soldiers were jeering and shouting at us and then when we crossed the border they put us on open trucks and through the Lebanese checkpoint at Marj al-Zahour [‘Meadow of Flowers’]. It was very cold, and then we had to walk and they started firing their guns to make us go faster. When we arrived it was like the destination of nothing and no return. It was snowing and there were just some tents with water coming in from many holes in them. We lived like natives, walking to find wood for our fires and only getting food from people in the villages nearby.63

This strategy of deportation utilized by Israel backfired significantly. It only strengthened the resolve of Hamas, and by the early part of 1993, Israel was in the midst of a wave of Hamas-inspired violence. Dr. Abdel Aziz Rantissi, one of the co-founders of the Hamas movement acted as the spokesman for the deportees and stated, “The movement has achieved great benefits after the deportation. It emerged from being a local and regional movement into an international movement … Therefore we now find that public opinion in Palestine is in full harmony with the stand of Hamas.”64

The decision to send the Hamas members to Lebanon would later prove to be an

62 Milton-Edwards and Farrell, Hamas, 64.
63 Ibid., 64-65.
64 Ibid., 65.
enormous mistake for Israel in another way, as it was an invaluable learning experience for Hamas where they obtained essential bomb-making instructions from their Lebanese brothers in Hezbollah on how to conduct their future missions of suicide terrorism.

**The Oslo Accords**

As the First Intifada began to simmer down in 1993, other important developments such as the Madrid Conference peace talks in 1991 and the Oslo Accords in 1993 developed.65 The PLO angered Hamas profusely when it abandoned its strategy of armed struggle, favoring instead negotiations, as it realized negotiations had a much greater chance of attaining peace and were a more logical solution in terms of meeting its demands for statehood and ending the occupation.66 Hamas condemned the PLO, labeling them as traitors to the cause, the same way it had during the Madrid Conference peace talks in 1991. Hamas leaders proclaimed the talks as “… a heresy that will lead to the surrender of Muslim lands to Jews.”67 Secret negotiations in Norway between the PLO and the government of Israel preceded the signing ceremony which, at the time, was most certainly the high point of Israeli-Palestinian relations throughout more than 60 years of persistent conflict between the two sides. The PLO

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66 Ibid., 66.

67 Ibid., 68.
agreed to recognize Israel, reject violence, alter its charter, and recognize Israeli
sovereignty over the portions of Palestine which Israel gained at the conclusion of the
1948 War; a move that completely bypassed Hamas and other radical Palestinian
factions.\textsuperscript{68} In return Israel would grant the Palestinians complete autonomy in the
West Bank and Gaza Strip, redeploying Israeli troops from some Palestinian areas.
Some of the more difficult and pertinent issues, including Jewish settlements in both
the West Bank and Gaza Strip, borders, and the return of Palestinian refugees would
remain to be discussed and decided upon during the final negotiations.\textsuperscript{69} With the
signing of the Oslo Accords on September 13, 1993, in Washington DC by Israeli
Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and the PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, it appeared that
peace-making would deliver real dividends for both sides. The idea was that the
Palestinians would gain freedom, prosperity, and eventual statehood, while the Israelis
would gain recognition, security, and prosperity.

The secret talks in Norway with the Israelis would produce an agreement that
could save the PLO and allow it to continue to represent the Palestinian people
at the negotiation table. Unfortunately, there were aspects of the agreement
which, upon closer scrutiny, caused concerns not just among the usual fanatics
and rejectionists. On the Palestinian side, respected secular figures such as the
writer and academic Edward Said publicly complained Arafat had capitulated by
signing up to the Palestinian equivalent of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, a
surrender that a defeated party had no choice but to accept. Moreover, critics
argued that the agreement would store up dangerous levels of resentment for the

\textsuperscript{68} Milton-Edwards and Farrell, \textit{Hamas}, 68.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
future, as Versailles had with the defeated Germans.  

Hamas was vehemently opposed to the agreement, because it believed the deal was a bad one for Palestinians living under occupation or those denied statehood and living in the Palestinian diaspora throughout the world. Dr. Mahmoud Zarar complained, “We need a peace process not a security agreement. They are still controlling the crossings, preventing pilgrimage. Every day they harass people who search for work … This is not a peace process … this is still occupation.” Hamas leaders believed that the PLO had sold out the Palestinians, particularly those who had made huge sacrifices during the Intifada. “We suffered under occupation,” opined Zahar. “We lost hundreds of our youth …. as a movement we’ve spent billions of years in Israeli jails and as deportees, and financially the Gaza Strip is still suffering from the occupation. We do not enjoy this occupation and so we are still looking to eliminate it.” Hamas leaders further complained, “This agreement is just a different face of the occupation. It will be a weak autonomous administration over just two percent of Palestine. Jerusalem and the settlements are left under the control of the Zionist entity.”

The split over Oslo clarified the internal Palestinian battle lines, pitting Hamas and Fatah against each other again with two very different visions of the future. Such actions only deepened the hostility between the two Palestinian

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71 Ibid., 70.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
movements, and exacerbated what were becoming endless rounds of internecine strife in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.\textsuperscript{74}

As popular sentiment began to favor a peace settlement and the PLO, Hamas was determined to continue expressing its opposing view through protests, coordinated attacks on Israeli targets, and a call for Intifada escalation. Hamas was not prepared to negotiate with the enemy maintaining that only through armed struggle, resistance, and jihad could the goal of liberating all of historic Palestine be completed. Hamas rejected the Oslo Accords largely due to the fact that the agreement included a negotiated settlement, international recognition of Israel, and alluded to, if not indicated the intention to set the parameters of any future Palestinian state. From the perspective of Hamas, the Oslo Accords did not comprise a peace agreement, and it was uncertain whether the violence would come to an end, as it failed to guarantee the fundamental issue of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Hamas continued the argument against Oslo, maintaining that it was not about establishing a Palestinian economy independent of Israel or about the promotion of democracy and in fact there was no Palestinian referendum even mentioned on the agreement. “The problem is that we have reduced the issue from one of sacred liberation to merely a dream of independence, a dream that a Palestinian policeman will organize traffic,” said Musa Abu Marzouq, then head of Hamas’s Political Bureau. “We have diminished the

\textsuperscript{74} Milton-Edwards and Farrell, \textit{Hamas}, 70.
Palestinian cause to a very simple thing.”75 Hamas continued to point out that the Oslo Accords did not contain an agreement on the continuing presence and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.76 The agreement also did not allow for a right of return for Palestinian refugees, and it did not establish Jerusalem as the capital city for the Palestinians.77 These were all issues of major contention within the Palestinian community.

Two Enemies

The PLO quickly became the favored party by most people in Palestine, since most people were ready for peace and a sense of normalcy, although the popularity and presence of the PLO and the Palestinian Authority did not deter Hamas from continuing its attacks on Israeli targets. Hamas now had two enemies to struggle against, the PLO and the Israelis. Hamas demonstrated this by continuing its attacks against the Israelis, even after they began withdrawing troops from Gaza’s major Palestinian towns and from Jericho in the West Bank.78 It also incorporated punishment attacks into its repertoire, executing those Palestinians who were accused of collaborating with Israel.

76 Ibid., 73.
77 Ibid., 77.
78 Ibid., 70.
The Hebron Massacre

Then suddenly the whole post-Oslo situation changed because of the actions of one Jewish settler: Baruch Goldstein. On February 24, 1994, the Brooklyn-born Goldstein walked into the Ibrahimi mosque in the West Bank town of Hebron wearing an Israeli soldier’s uniform, and opened fire on Palestinian worshippers as they knelt in prayer during the holy month of Ramadan, killing 29 people. The mosque stood on the Tomb of the Patriarchs, reputed to be the burial site of the Old Testament Prophet Abraham, and is a site revered by Jews and Muslims alike.79

In the chaos that ensued Israeli soldiers killed increased numbers of Palestinians and imposed strict curfews. Palestinians, Hamas in particular, questioned how such a massacre, as the attack was labeled across the West Bank and Gaza, could be committed by an Israeli settler while guards and soldiers were protecting the area. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin condemned the attack in a powerful speech in front of the Israel Parliament, but Hamas, not content with verbal condemnations, vowed that it would seek revenge form the Hebron massacre.80

In a communiqué entitled, ‘The settlers will pay for the massacre with the blood of their hearts’, it said that, if Israel was indiscriminate in distinguishing between ‘fighters and unarmed civilians’, then Hamas would be ‘forced … to treat the Zionists in the same manner. Treating like with like is a universal principle.81

After the traditional 40 days of Muslim mourning, Hamas made good on its threat of retaliation, although the attack was not directed at the settlers. Instead, Hamas targeted the town of Afula which was an Israeli town established by an American Zionist group

80 Ibid., 78.
81 Ibid.
in 1925. With this attack, Hamas forever altered the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for the worse. Nothing would ever be the same again throughout the Arab-Israeli conflict.

\footnote{Milton-Edwards and Farrell, \textit{Hamas}, 78.}
CHAPTER III

SUICIDE ATTACKS BEGIN: POLITICS AND REVENGE

In order to determine the mindset of a suicide bomber and his motivation for killing himself in order to kill others, I will provide an in-depth examination of a few of the bloodiest cases of suicide terrorism implemented by Hamas in order to come to a reasonable conclusion about the motivation behind the attacks, which I perceive to be political in nature. There is a common misconception across many circles that suicide attacks are conducted only as a ‘jihad’ or holy war against Jews, but it is clear based on the examples provided that this is not the case. The cases are listed in chronological order below, in this chapter and the next, and range from 1994 to 2008. After stating the facts of each case, I will draw careful conclusions to defend my argument that the motivation for these suicide attacks is most certainly political.

Afula Suicide Attack: April 6, 1994

The Afula attack is what many consider to be the first ever suicide attack orchestrated by Hamas against the Israelis.\(^1\) The attack targeted innocent Israeli civilians and occurred on April 6, 1994, in Afula, a town six miles from the northern border of the West Bank and about 40 miles northwest of Jerusalem. This attack changed everything as it occurred within the confines of Israel. It was not directed at the settlers, as Hamas warned, but within Israel itself. It resulted in the deaths of eight

\(^1\) There is a conflict regarding the actual first instance of suicide terrorism perpetrated by Hamas against Israel. Both incidents are cited in this thesis.
Israelis and left another 34 wounded. Hamas quickly claimed responsibility for the attack calling it a “heroic suicide operation.” Radio and mosque broadcasts in Gaza City said the attack was aimed at halting the Israel-PLO plan for Palestinian autonomy. The bombing occurred just as Israeli and PLO negotiations regarding autonomy were, according to delegates, in their final stages. One broadcast said, “We claim responsibility for the heroic suicide operation in Afula. We proved to the world that the arms of (Hamas) are capable of stopping all the conspiracies that are plotted against our people both here and abroad.” It was a car bomb, and many of the victims were just teenagers from a junior high school who were getting out of their classes for the day. A caller to a Western news agency, speaking in Arabic, said the Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas, claimed responsibility for the attack in Afula. He provided details about the attack such as how the car contained 385 pounds of explosives and how a 19 year old named Ra’id Zakarna, from the West Bank village of

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.
Qabatiya, carried out the attack. Subsequent to the Hebron massacre, Hamas had issued leaflets threatening to attack Israeli targets in order to avenge the Hebron massacre which occurred 40 days earlier when Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein gunned down 29 Muslim worshipers praying in a mosque. This change in strategy to utilize suicide attacks against the Israeli population was a warning sign of things to come. This was a deliberate assault on the Israeli state of being, and the beginning of a relentless throng of suicide attacks that would keep Israeli citizens, not just settlers, on edge, even within their borders. Musa Abu Marzouq said several years later that, “We were against targeting civilians … but no one asked about Palestinian civilian deaths … no one cared … After the Hebron massacre we determined that it was time to kill Israel’s civilians … we offered to stop if Israel would, but they rejected that offer.” The leaders of Hamas felt as if they were out of options so they turned to suicide terrorism as a last resort. One Hamas leader named Usama Hamdan argued, “We have done our best to target the military not civilians … but the talk of suicide bombers in Israel misses the major point—which is the occupation. All other channels have been closed to us, so we use violence.” As you will see with every example of suicide terrorism throughout this chapter, it always comes back to the politics surrounding the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

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12 Ibid.
Without the occupation, argues Hamas, there would be no suicide attacks targeting Israel.

**Hadera Bus Station Suicide Attack: April 13, 1994**

On the morning of April 13, 1994, only one week after the first major suicide attack within Israel, another bomb demolished a crowded bus idling in Hadera’s Central Bus Station, killing five Israelis and injuring another 25.13 Hamas quickly claimed responsibility for the attack, labeling it as only the second of five planned revenge attacks in response to the Hebron mosque massacre that occurred two months before.14 This attack was particularly significant in that it occurred on the day that was supposed to mark the end of Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and a West Bank town. However, the deadline was missed as negotiations were delayed. Previously, such violence against Israel brought harsh consequences, like the deportation of 400 Islamic activists to Lebanon in 1992 and the extended sealing off of the occupied territories to Arab travel in 1993, from Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.15 The difference this time around was that the territories were already closed off, disallowing Palestinians from traveling to and working inside Israel, so alternative means were explored. In an effort to stop the suicide attacks, Rabin’s government arrested more than 1,600 Islamists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.16 He also demanded that the

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14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

leader of the PLO, Arafat, use his security forces to do the same. Arafat commented that Israel actions contributed to a thickening air of violence by what he called a “… policy of mass killings, detention, imposing curfews and isolating towns,” but he followed Rabin’s demands and rounded up thousands of Islamists putting them into jail.\(^{17}\) Hamas reacted to the clampdown by the PLO and Israel with boldness stating in one communiqué, “The latest insane arrests will not affect Hamas strength one bit. Rabin must understand that only when he is able to make the sun rise in the West will he be able to affect the strength of Hamas.”\(^{18}\) Nevertheless, Hamas was determined to continue to fight the occupation at all costs and Rabin’s sealing of the borders and roundup of thousands of Islamists only served to enrage the members of Hamas even further. Hamas had no shortage of young Palestinian ‘martyrs’ offering themselves for such missions, proving that the organization had the technical and operational ability to pull off these suicide attacks. “Palestinians had grown used to the idea of their young people being willing to die in the name of the struggle for freedom and liberation, but the notion that such people would strap explosives to their bodies and throw themselves at Israeli civilians was a new development.”\(^{19}\) Even though the Israelis jailed thousands of Palestinian Islamists, along with help from the PLO, the attacks continued. Israel struggled to react to the situation in any sort of timely manner, and initially had trouble infiltrating the cells that plotted the attacks. Hamas used suicide


\(^{19}\) Ibid.
terrorism as a vehicle for politically motivated retaliation on the Israelis. It was revenge for the Palestinian refugees that were killed in previous attacks.

**Tel Aviv Bus Suicide Attack: October 19, 1994**

Another suicide attack that occurred later in 1994 was the bus attack that transpired during rush hour on October 19th in a busy commercial district in Tel Aviv.\(^{20}\) The attack killed 22 people and injured another 48.\(^{21}\) It was very clear that the attack was a direct response to Israel’s occupation and control over the Palestinian people. One of the founding members of Hamas, Ibrahim Yazouri, likened the Tel Aviv bombing to the Hebron massacre that occurred approximately eight months earlier stating, “This is a natural outcome of the Israeli occupation and its oppression of the Palestinians.”\(^{22}\) Ibrahim Shurafa, a Gaza City grocer described the Tel Aviv attack stating, “Everybody’s pleased. The Israeli civilian is like the Israeli soldier. They all serve in the army.”\(^{23}\) To further incite the Israelis, Hamas leaders and other Palestinians had the loudspeakers over the mosques in the Gaza Strip announce that the bus attack in Tel Aviv was carried out using techniques that they acquired during their exile in Lebanon which, unfortunately for Israel, was where the Israelis had deported 415 Hamas members in December of 1992.\(^{24}\) The same claim was made in a phone


\(^{21}\) Ibid.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.

\(^{23}\) Ibid.

\(^{24}\) Ibid.
call to Israeli radio when an anonymous caller from the Hamas movement claimed responsibility for the attack by stating, “We thank the Israeli government for deporting us to Lebanon where we underwent an explosive course.”

As stated earlier, the members of Hamas felt as if there was very little hope and no other option other than to resort to suicide terrorism to try and release Palestine from the grip of Israel’s terror-filled occupation.

Hamas released a videotape of the suicide bomber, Saleh Abdul Rahim Suwai Nazzal, who blew up the bus in the Tel Aviv suicide operation and remarked, “We had no other choice but to make all the Jewish people hostages of fear and horror.”

In another statement he also made reference to the decision by Prime Minister Rabin and army chief of staff Lieutenant General Ehud Barak to rescue kidnapped soldier Nachson Waxman, instead of complying with the demands of the Hamas kidnappers to release Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, resulting in the deaths of three Hamas activists and the capturing of two other Hamas members. He said, “The lowly Rabin and Barak said they didn’t have any other choice but to kill the cell which protected the life of the kidnapped soldier Nachshon Waxman, ignoring all our human demands to release the prisoners and detainees in the prisons of the unjust.”

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25 Deutsche Presse-Agentur, “At least 22 killed as Hamas Bombs Tel Aviv bus – Israel in shock,” Deutsche Presse-Agentur, October 19, 1994.


27 Ibid.
himself a ‘living martyr,’ went on to say that until all prisoners are released, Hamas would continue its “martyrdom operations” against the Israelis.\textsuperscript{28} The unfortunate thing, for the Palestinians as a people, is that these political attacks via suicide bomber only strengthen Israel’s stranglehold over Palestine even further. Unfortunately, these violent actions enacted by only a few people, such as the members of Hamas, affect the entire Palestinian population. Whether innocent or guilty of the attacks everyone suffers. Innocent Palestinians suffer under a life of occupation and restriction from Israel and innocent Israelis live in fear of continuous Hamas suicide attacks attempting to liberate the people of Palestine from the state of Israel.

The victims of this specific Tel Aviv bus attack were not only the 22 innocent Israeli citizens murdered and the other 48 injured just riding the bus and going about their everyday lives, but the Palestinian and Israeli people as a whole. Israel reacted as it usually did, after attacks that took place inside Israel, and sealed off the Gaza Strip and the West Bank with hopes of improving Israel’s sense of security.\textsuperscript{29} One of the problems this posed for innocent Palestinians who did not approve of or support terrorism or acts of violence was that it applied restrictions such as border closings and checkpoints that prevented Palestinian laborers from reaching their jobs in Israel. “The closure, intended to quell Israeli fears of terrorist raids, feeds Palestinian resentment and support for extremist groups by barring tens of thousands from jobs in Israel,” thus


leading to more outbursts of violence in the region which ultimately prevented peace and created continued hardships and fear for both Israelis and Palestinians.\(^{30}\) This attack was the worst attack in Israel since the start of autonomy, and Israel reacted by clamping down with quarantine on the autonomous Gaza Strip. It also resulted in a curfew throughout the occupied West Bank from where Palestinians were also barred from entering Israel.\(^{31}\) “Everything must be done to cut Hamas from its roots,” said Israeli Chief of Staff Ehud Barak, who advised a reevaluation of the “… way we live side by side with the Palestinians.”\(^{32}\) The attacks also greatly threatened the peace process that was in progress at the time and additionally further provoked Israel towards complete and all-out war.\(^{33}\) The attacks were most likely a direct response to the peace agreement that had been reached with Jordan just two weeks prior. In terms of the suicide attacker’s family, the father disclosed that he was informed shortly after the incident by Israeli authorities that his small house would be destroyed in response to his son’s act, and the Israeli army also notified other family members that their houses would be destroyed as well.\(^{34}\) This is just one small demonstration of how these attacks have a lasting effect not necessarily understood by the bomber at the time of his mission. He is clearly motivated by his political mission to put an end to Israel’s

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\(^{32}\) Ibid.

\(^{33}\) Ibid.

occupation, regardless of the cost his actions might impose on his family members left behind. In most societies though, if a family member or friend committed a crime or acted out with violence, it would not be the family members or friends who would pay the penalty. Unfortunately for the Palestinians, the Israelis generally punished anyone who was associated with a potential threat to the Israeli government and its people.

**Attempted Christmas Day Suicide Attack: December 25, 1994**

Just like all of the suicide attacks orchestrated by Hamas, an attempted suicide attack on Christmas day December 25, 1994, clearly had political aspirations behind it. Ayman Kamil Rada’s attempt to board a bus filled with Israeli serviceman and blow it up ended in failure when the bus driver noticed he was a civilian and shut the door on him. When he realized he would not be able to get onto the bus, the suicide bomber detonated his explosives next to the bus, injuring 12 people and killing himself. Several statements from Hamas, regarding the young suicide bomber who launched an attack against an Israeli air force transport bus, clarified the political nature of the attack. One statement mentioned, “The attack was aimed at proving Jerusalem will remain the capital of Palestine despite the Zionist’s settlement programmes.”

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37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.
Arab-Israeli conflict, as it is religiously significant to both the Arabs and the Israelis, not to mention the Christians. In regards to the suicide attack a leaflet released the following day stated “… the attack was a response to Israeli settlement activity in Arab areas of Jerusalem as well as revenge for the recent car-bomb killings of Muslim militants in Gaza and southern Lebanon.” 39 As Israeli settlements continued to develop and expand further into Palestinian lands, the attacks continued to grow worse. This attack was also undoubtedly a statement against Israel’s policy of occupation and its border sealing that restricts everyday Palestinian life.

**Dual Suicide Attacks in Netanya: January 22, 1995**

On January 22, 1995, two Palestinian suicide bombers carried out attacks against the Israelis, killing at least 18 people and injuring upwards of 50 more innocent people. 40 The bombings took place at a bus station terminal in Netanya and caused the Israel cabinet to call off a debate that was ongoing regarding the placement of a freeze on Jewish settlements throughout the region. 41 Both Hamas and Islamic Jihad laid claim to the suicide attack. This suicide attack resulted in one of the highest casualty tolls from any attack preceding it throughout Israel’s brief history. 42 When Israel’s


41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.
Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was asked to describe the attacks against mostly Israel soldiers he said, “I have no words to describe the murderous horror committed by a fanatical organization which knows no bounds in its willingness to commit indiscriminate murder. The political aim is clear - stopping any chance for the advance of peace.” Both the Israelis and the Palestinians understood that the attacks were driven by political contentions. The Jewish people insisted the attacks were aimed at preventing peace in the region, while the Palestinians claimed the attacks were necessary, because it was their only hope against defeating the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Suicide terrorism was the only way members of groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad felt they could counter the Israeli occupation and its stranglehold over Palestine. An interview with a Secretary General of Islamic Jihad, a group which had much the same goals in mind as Hamas, helps one understand why these attacks against Israel continued to occur. When asked about what comes to mind when he sees an Israeli bus full of soldiers blown up by a Palestinian he stated:

This scene recalls to my mind the other side of the picture, which is the massacres and killings committed by these soldiers every day against our Palestinian people. Also if those killed in the bus were soldiers, then I would feel proud of our people’s ability to defend themselves and to inflict pain on this enemy who inflicts pain on us every day.

He was also asked about whether or not a competition existed between Islamic Jihad and Hamas regarding who kills more Israelis to which he remarked:

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There is a competition among all factions in the arena of struggle and resistance, but it is not over killing. We are not bloodthirsty and we do not kill others for the sake of killing. We do not enjoy killing. We are defending our rights and ourselves. We did not occupy a land that belonged to the Jews and we did not destroy their homeland. They killed us, dispersed us, and established their entity over our ruins.45

When asked about calming the situation down he offered these thoughts:

The explosive situation within Palestine is not of our making so that we cannot be asked to calm it. The enemy is setting on fire everything under the feet of our people and we are defending ourselves. We expressed our opinion of our people’s legitimate right to defend themselves in the face of the continuous Zionist aggression.46

The comments above by Dr. Ramadan Abdullah Shallah summarize quite well the feeling of many Palestinians held under the grasp of Israel’s occupation. Many Palestinians had their homes taken from them so that Israel could extend its settlements into Palestine giving its Jewish settlers a place to call home. The Israelis did not take into consideration what would happen to the many innocent Palestinians who were forced from their homes and pushed off of their land and into refugee camps.

Palestinians were also treated brutally and reprehensibly by Israeli forces. Innocent Palestinians were abused, beaten, and jailed without probable cause, and completely restricted at times due to curfews and the occupation. Hamas’s viewpoint is that it did not utilize terror just for the sake of using terror. On the contrary, the group organized and implemented suicide attacks in order to attempt to release itself from the terror and


46 Ibid.
torture implemented by Israel upon innocent Palestinians each and every day.

_Dual Suicide Attacks in Occupied Palestine: April 9, 1995_

A double suicide bombing occurred in occupied Palestine on April 9, 1995, severely disrupting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The results of the two attacks left seven Israeli soldiers and police dead, the two bombers who blew themselves up, and 57 others injured. A spokesman for Hamas, Ibrahim Ghawshah, said it had not given up its goals to fight the Israeli occupation and bring down the Israeli-PLO autonomy accords which launched Palestinian self-rule. He stated, “The position of Hamas remains unchanged on these questions … and we cannot freeze or renounce our resistance programme while the Israeli occupation continues in Gaza, the West Bank, and Palestine.” Gaza residents also reported that the Palestinian police carried out a sweep of arrests the night following the attacks and detained about 100 people suspected of being members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Both groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, said the bombings were reprisals for Israeli actions, including an explosion last week in Gaza that killed a Hamas leader. The explanation from Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA), the administrative organization created

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47 Ibid.


pursuant to the Oslo Accords to govern parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, stated the explosion was accidentally set off in a Hamas bomb factory. 51 Hamas called the explosion an Israeli assassination of one of its leaders and vowed to take revenge for the assassination through more suicide attacks. 52 Mr. Rabin asserted that an Israeli closing of the Gaza Strip, imposed after previous suicide bombings, had prevented today’s attacks from occurring inside Israel. 53 But he vowed to protect Israelis in the Gaza Strip and rejected proposals to remove the settlers, saying that under the accord with the Palestinians, settlements are to remain in place. 54 These attacks also revived calls by right-wing politicians that would stop negotiations with the Palestinians. It prompted Israeli Cabinet ministers to warn that a July 1, 1995, deadline for an agreement on an Israeli pullback in the West Bank might not be met if the PA does not wage an all-out campaign against the Muslim militants and disarm them. 55 The living conditions for both the Palestinians and the Israelis were becoming even worse. The Israelis were living in fear of Hamas and other Palestinian militant suicide attacks, but the people of Palestine were also being repressed by Israel. The Palestinians were being deprived of basic human rights by their Israeli oppressors, who controlled their movement and forced them into refugee camps in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.


52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.
The Assassinations of Yitzhak Rabin and the Engineer: Late 1995 / Early 1996

The situation deteriorated even further after two pivotal assassinations occurred in late 1995 and early 1996. Israel’s Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated in November of 1995 by a right-wing Israeli religious extremist, Yigal Amir, who was opposed to Rabin’s signing of the Oslo Accords. Amir shot Rabin out of religious conviction, even citing the Torah, as he admitted shooting Rabin to prevent the return of the West Bank to Palestinians. The other key assassination was the elimination of Hamas’s most notorious bomb-maker, known as Yehia “the Engineer” Ayyash, when he was killed via a targeted assassination in January 1996 by the Israelis. Ayyash was a highly skilled bomb-maker and an explosives expert. These talents earned him the nickname “the Engineer.” Provoked by the Hebron Massacre, Ayyash was responsible for most of the suicide attacks previously mentioned throughout this thesis, as it was his signature bomb bags that were utilized by the suicide bombers in their attacks. He was driven to a head after the Hebron Massacre and made an obligation to his comrades that his revenge would cause every Israeli and their government to feel deep remorse. He was the number one fugitive on Israel’s wanted list and for a very

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57 Ibid.
58 Chehab, Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement, 60.
59 Ibid., 55.
60 Ibid., 56.
good reason. The total number of people killed by “the Engineer” and his students was estimated to be at least 70 with more than 400 others injured. The Israelis strengthened their search for Ayyash around this time and in the process unfairly punished and arrested members of his family, even causing his father to lose his hearing while he was beaten and tortured under Israeli arrest. The members of his village also suffered when the Israelis cut off electricity to the village and left the streets in disorder. On January 4, 1996, while visiting an old friend at a trusted safe house “the Engineer” talked tactics, alluding to the fact that he and his friend should “… carry out more attacks in the heart of Israel so that Israeli politicians would get the message that their policies would not bring them security but instead provoke even more killing.” Unsuspectingly to Ayyash and his friend Osama Hammad, Hammad’s cousin Kamal Hammad was working with Israeli intelligence and informed them of Ayyash’s location. The Israelis and Kamal developed a scenario whereby a cellular phone equipped with a tiny, discreet time bomb could be passed to Ayyash whenever the opportunity presented itself. Ironically, this is how “the Engineer” met his

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61 Chehab, Inside Hamas, 56.
62 Ibid., 57.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 59.
66 Ibid., 60.
67 Ibid.
demise, when the phone he was talking on exploded in his ear killing him instantly.\textsuperscript{68} Kamal was a member of Hamas, who was widely rumored to have been paid a million dollars by Israeli intelligence as a reward for aiding in the killing of “the Engineer.”\textsuperscript{69} He was later moved to a safe house inside Israel for his own protection. Around the same time these assassinations transpired, both Palestinian and Israeli discouragement was progressively swelling concerning the validity of the Oslo Accords. Every year the Palestinians saw Jewish settlements rapidly developing throughout occupied Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{70} There was also rampant corruption within Palestinian society as the PA political and security officials were siphoning off money at the expense of the Palestinian people.\textsuperscript{71} Israeli, meanwhile, saw Palestinian bombers and gunmen in their towns and on their streets, many wondering what purpose the Oslo Accords served if it gave sovereignty to a PA government with “… thousands of security officials who either would not, or could not, deliver safety for Israelis.”\textsuperscript{72} The assassinations coupled with Palestinian and Israeli disillusionment would create even more devastating violence to come in the early part of 1996.

\textit{Dual Suicide Attacks in Ashkelon and Jerusalem: February 25, 1996}

Hamas implemented a suicide bombing campaign in the early part of 1996

\textsuperscript{68} Chehab, \textit{Inside Hamas}, 59-60.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 61.


\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
beginning with dual suicide attacks that took place on February 25, 1996.\textsuperscript{73} The two suicide attacks that occurred on the 25\textsuperscript{th} killed 27 Israelis and wounded upwards of 80 others.\textsuperscript{74} A couple of Muslim militants set off suicide bombs that ripped through a city bus in downtown Jerusalem and at a soldiers’ post in the coastal city of Ashkelon. Hamas claimed responsibility in a leaflet signed, “The disciples of Yehiye Ayyash,” also known as “the Engineer” in reference to the chief Hamas bomb maker who was assassinated, with the help of Kamal Hammad, on January 5, 1996, by Israeli intelligence forces.\textsuperscript{75} Ayyash was one of Hamas’s most celebrated and respected soldiers fighting the occupation, and the group avenged his death through more suicide bombings. The leaflet said the bombings avenged Ayyash’s death, and Hamas claimed responsibility saying that they would end the violence if Israel stopped hunting down Hamas fugitives and released the group’s detainees.\textsuperscript{76} The back to back suicide attacks, coming nearly six months after a calming in violence, were the bloodiest in Israel since the hijacking of an Israeli commuter bus by Palestinian guerrillas in the late 1970s.\textsuperscript{77} The results of the attacks were similar to those of other attacks. Prime

\textsuperscript{73} Deutsche Presse-Agentur, “Suicide Bombers Identified – Crackdown on Islamic Militants,” Deutsche Presse-Agentur, February 27, 1996.


\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
Minister Shimon Peres temporarily suspended contact with Yasser Arafat and the PA, and he sealed off the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He also promised harsh retaliation against Hamas and its smaller sister group Islamic Jihad. All Palestinians were once again restricted under the suppression of Israeli occupation.

**Tel Aviv Shopping Mall Suicide Attack: March 4, 1996**

On March 4, 1996, a crippling suicide attack occurred in a shopping mall in Tel Aviv. A Palestinian suicide bomber exploded his human bomb in a crowd of innocent people, many of them children, resulting in the deaths of 14 people and the wounding of over 130 others. Sadly, this was the fourth suicide attack conducted in one week’s time against the Israelis and one that brought with it the loss of many innocent lives, but it also created very unfortunate consequences for all Palestinians, even though the vast majority had nothing to do with the attack. Hamas quickly claimed responsibility for the attack by calling into an Israeli radio station and proclaiming, “We will continue to strike hard blows against all citizens of the Jewish state. We will not cease.” This attack placed Israel on the offensive with Interior Minister Haim Ramon stating, “Today the government has decided on full freedom of

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79 Ibid.


81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.
action for the security forces. This body will be permitted to act anywhere the Hamas is organizing to hurt us.\textsuperscript{83} This meant catastrophic consequences for all Palestinians, regardless of whether they were supportive of or connected to Hamas.

Israel’s response to the barrage of attacks that occurred during the two weeks in late February and early March of 1996 was to barricade Palestinian residents inside hundreds of West Bank towns and villages.\textsuperscript{84} The Israeli troops erected barricades around more than 400 West Bank communities, confining all Palestinian residents by restricting them to their immediate communities, even though most had nothing to do with the attacks. The Israelis also went from town to town rounding up groups of Palestinians for questioning. At the West Bank village of Burka, soldiers forced all men older than 15 years of age into the main square, forcing them to sit on the ground as the army questioned them one by one.\textsuperscript{85} Quite a few of these areas were just recently celebrating the lifting of Israeli occupation when it came clamping down again. The announcement also banned the employment of Palestinians in Jewish settlements in the West Bank. That, coupled with the inability of some 60,000 Palestinians to reach jobs inside Israel, in effect, put a cease to any employment of Palestinians in Israeli territory.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{84} Dan Perry, “Israeli Troops Barricade Palestinians in West Bank after Bombing,” \textit{Associated Press}, March 5, 1996.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Serge Schmemann, “Bombing Is Israel: The Overview; 4\textsuperscript{th} Terror Blast in Israel Kills 14 at Mall in Tel Aviv; Nine-Day Toll Grows To 61,” \textit{New York Times}, March 5, 1996.
Expecting a full siege of Israeli forces into their communities Palestinians quickly began buying up food and gasoline in the West Bank, causing several gas stations to run out of fuel and stores to run out certain staple foods.\textsuperscript{87} The Israeli occupation made it harder for goods and services to get in and out of Gaza and the West Bank, thus making everyday life even more difficult for ordinary Palestinians just trying to get by and live their lives. The Israelis clamped down extremely hard on all Palestinians, regardless of the fact that many had no affiliation with Hamas or any of the other groups deemed to be terrorist organizations by Israel. The human rights of Palestinians were not taken into account as they were arrested, rounded up, and questioned without any due process. The Israelis continued to treat all of the Palestinian people like second class citizens even when most had nothing to do with the suicide attacks that were taking place.

\textit{Apropo Café Suicide Attack: March 21, 1997}

The next suicide attack I will discuss is the Apropo Café attack that erupted on March 21, 1997, in the Israeli city of Tel Aviv.\textsuperscript{88} This attack resulted in the deaths of three people and injured another 48 people.\textsuperscript{89} The suicide attacker, Mohamed Abdel


\textsuperscript{88} Deutsche Presse-Agentur, “Israel Seals Home of Hamas Tel Aviv Bomber,” \textit{Deutsche Presse-Agentur}, March 22, 1997.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
Khader Abudaya, had a work permit to enter Israel and work as a waiter in Tel Aviv. His work status made his mission a little bit easier as his entry into Israel was greatly simplified due to his Israeli work permit. Unfortunately, for most Palestinians who work legitimately in Israel, to provide for their families, they suffer significantly when an attack like this occurs. This is because Israel seals the borders and adds more checkpoints making it next to impossible to travel freely throughout the region. This was the case in almost all of the suicide attacks that occurred. Regarding this specific attack, Hamas claimed responsibility via a telephone call to a radio station saying, “… it was in retaliation for Israel’s decision to start building a new housing project for 30,000 Jews in historically Arab East Jerusalem.” The political implications are clear in this situation as this attack was due to Israel’s hardline settlement policies which threatened to derail the peace process between both sides. East Jerusalem is also the location where the Palestinians want their capital to be should they achieve statehood. The terror and violence that transpired this day killed innocent Israelis and disrupted everyday life for many other Israeli citizens, but it also had major negative implications for innocent Palestinians who had nothing to do with the attacks. The Israeli prevention of Palestinian free travel for work, to visit family and friends, or just

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for the sake of pleasure is completely deplorable. Israel should not have the right to control an entire population as they please. People have rights and the Israelis were clearly violating the rights of all Palestinian people through their policy of occupation.

**Jerusalem Shopping Mall Suicide Attack: September 4, 1997**

On September 4, 1997, a bloody and violent suicide attack erupted at a shopping mall right in the very heart of Jerusalem. Three suicide attackers detonated their human suicide bombs in the crowded Ben Yehuda mall which resulted in the deaths of four victims in addition to the deaths of the three suicide attackers. The number of wounded shoppers also exceeded 150 people in the violent blast. When Palestinians in the West Bank city of Ramallah were interviewed about the attack they condemned it but also called the attack an inevitable result of the disastrous policies of the Israeli Government. Israel, as they usually do anytime there is a suicide terrorist attack, sealed off Ramallah as well as numerous other West Bank cities under Palestinian control, preventing people from entering or leaving. This restrictive control over the Palestinians and the occupying presence of the Israelis led to so many

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94 Ibid.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.
of the horrific suicide attacks perpetrated by Hamas, including this particular one. A shop owner from Ramallah who identified himself only as Khalil said, “Pressure leads to an explosion. They destroy houses, take land, and prevent people from working. Revenge breeds revenge.”97 In the aftermath of a bombing in Jerusalem on July 30, 1997, the Israelis demolished more than two dozen Arab homes on the grounds that they had been built without permits and barred Palestinian laborers from working in Israel.98 The attacks always had a political connection. The Arabs and Israelis did not trust each other. Israeli settlements continued and Palestinian homes were destroyed. Another shopkeeper who was not identified was quoted as saying, “Hamas is a part of the Palestinian people, and our unity is more important than what the Israelis are demanding. People feel no economic improvements, and politically it’s very bad. The accords have proven to be a big lie.”99 Since economic, humanitarian, and political conditions rarely changed for the Palestinians, regardless of numerous attempts by both the Israelis and Palestinians to solve the conflict through negotiations, the attacks continued to occur quite frequently throughout the rest of the decade and most of the next decade.


98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.
Gaza City School Bus Attempted Suicide Attack: October 30, 1998

Another politically inspired suicide attack occurred on October 30, 1998, when an Israeli jeep blocked a suicide bomber from ramming a car filled with explosives into an Israeli school bus transporting young children to school in occupied Gaza City. The result of the attack left one Israeli soldier dead as well as the suicide bomber. All of the children on the bus were thankfully spared, due to the interception of the explosive-laden vehicle by one of the Israeli military vehicles that traveled in the armored convoy with the school bus every day in order to protect the settlement children on their way to school. The attack occurred in response to the politically charged aftermath of the peace accord signing the previous week, which would have exchanged land in the West Bank in return for a promised Palestinian (PLO) crackdown on Palestinian terrorism (Hamas). Coming only six days after the land-for-security agreement, the attack was launched by a Hamas group with nothing to lose since they felt as if this agreement targeted them directly. The immediate impact of the attack for the Palestinian people within the Gaza Strip was the sealing off of borders which prevented any Palestinians from leaving Gaza. The unfortunate thing about suicide attacks for Palestinians is that they are orchestrated by a small minority

101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
(Hamas), but the attacks actually wind up affecting the entire Palestinian population. This is because Israel’s occupying forces almost always sealed off the borders which restricted many ordinary Palestinian citizens from getting to and from their jobs or just getting around in general. The checkpoints and border closings instituted by the Israeli forces only further enraged ordinary Palestinian citizens who just wanted to lead a normal life. The border closings and checkpoints made it extremely difficult, if not impossible at times, to get to work in order to provide a livelihood for their families. The cycle of Israeli occupation, countered with politically motivated suicide terrorism by Hamas, continued to repeat itself over and over again. Hamas was prepared to fight this revolution until it achieved victory over the occupation.

**Nahariya Train Station Suicide Attack: September 9, 2001**

On September 9, 2001, a suicide bomber blew himself up at the Nahariya train station in Israel resulting in the deaths of three Israelis and the wounding of approximately 74 other people.\(^{105}\) Israel radio said Hamas claimed responsibility for the Nahariya attack, but Sheikh Yassin, the Hamas leader in Gaza, declined to assert such responsibility. Sheikh Yassin said, “These attacks are a natural reaction to the Israeli aggression on our people and our land.”\(^{106}\) This statement by Sheikh Yassin unmistakably expressed Hamas’s standpoint that the attacks were derived from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. In the weeks prior to the attack, Israeli officials had been warning that militant groups, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, were

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\(^{106}\) Ibid.
recruiting in the Arab towns of the north, feeding off resentments about discrimination and neglect by successive Jewish governments.\textsuperscript{107} The suicide bomber, Sheikh Muhammad Shaker Sala Hebesha, was the first known Israeli Arab to conduct a suicide mission against Israel.\textsuperscript{108} Palestinian officials warned the bloodshed would continue until Israel sought out a political settlement with the Palestinians.\textsuperscript{109} A member of the Arab league, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher, insisted there was no end in sight saying, “Resistance to the occupation will continue as long as the occupation continues and the peace process is halted.”\textsuperscript{110} He added that Israel had to begin a political dialogue with the Palestinians immediately.\textsuperscript{111} Nabil Shaath, the Palestinian minister for planning and international cooperation, said during the meeting, “This explosive situation has a single reason: the continuation of the occupation.”\textsuperscript{112} The attacks occurred just as the Israeli government was to discuss a plan to build fences along the boundary line with the West Bank border and declare areas east of that line closed military zones aimed at preventing Palestinians from illegally entering Israel.\textsuperscript{113} Israel responded to the Hamas orchestrated suicide attack


\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.

by attacking Palestinian government offices in Ramallah and other locations in the Gaza Strip. This was due to Israel’s perception that the PA was unwilling to crack down on Hamas and other terrorist groups within Palestine that were conducting suicide attacks against the Israelis.\footnote{Brilliant, “Five Israelis Die in Palestinian Attacks,” \textit{United Press International}, September 9, 2001.}
CHAPTER IV

SUICIDE ATTACKS THROUGHOUT THE SECOND INTIFADA

The next series of attacks I will discuss occurred during the Second Intifada, and the motivation behind the attacks was quite the same as First Intifada. Politically inspired suicide attacks conducted by Hamas against the Israelis were aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

The Spark: Sharon Visits the Temple Mount

The Second Intifada was prompted on September 28, 2000 just two months after Bill Clinton failed to broker a peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians at Camp David, when Israel’s right-wing opposition leader, Ariel Sharon, went for a highly publicized walkabout through Jerusalem’s Old City.1 An extremely important religious site to both the Jews and the Arabs, his visit to Har Ha-Bayit (considered the Temple Mount by the Jews) and Al-Haram al-Sharif (considered the Noble Sanctuary by the Arabs) deeply infuriated the Palestinians.2 The Palestinians were enraged, because his visit was seen as an attempt to assert Israeli control over the long disputed site. What happened next proved to be catastrophic for both the Israelis and the Palestinians for years to come. In response to Sharon’s visit a Palestinian demonstration transpired, and it was countered by Israeli police firing tear gas and rubber bullets at the demonstrators. Four Palestinians were killed in the melee that


2 Ibid.
ensued, which quickly led to riots and protests throughout Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza.³ This culminated with deadly clashes between the Palestinians and Israeli forces all over the region, resulting in the deaths of at least 55 people in the first week of the Second Intifada—the majority of which were Palestinians.⁴

The Ignition: The Palestinian Boy Martyr and the Israeli Soldiers’ Lynching

There were two extremely polarizing events that all but stifled any hopes of peace for both sides just after the Second Intifada was sparked by Sharon’s visit to the holy site. A young Palestinian boy named Mohammed al-Dura was shot dead in the Gaza Strip as he was caught in the crossfire of Palestinian militants and Israeli soldiers on September 30, 2000.⁵ Lying on the ground defenselessly, crouched behind his father, the last moments of his life were captured on video by a Palestinian cameraman working for a French television station.⁶ These images were quickly broadcast all over the world and the boy became an instant martyr, inciting more Palestinians to join the resistance and fight the Israeli occupation. Less than two weeks following the death of the boy, Mohammed al-Dura, two Israeli soldiers, named Yosef Avrahami and Vadim Norzhich, were lynched and mutilated by a Palestinian mob after they took a wrong turn in the West Bank and ended up in Ramallah.⁷ The brutal murders of these men

⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid., 88.
were then broadcast all over the world, definitively eliminating any prospects for peace in the region. These incidents were very telling of the violence that would follow, as the Second Intifada would prove to be much deadlier than the First Intifada for both the Israelis and the Palestinians alike.

**Netanya Suicide Attack: March 4, 2001**

On March 4, 2001, Ahmad Omar Elayan, set off an explosion that killed three Israelis in addition to himself. The attack took place in the Israeli town of Netanya, and the effects of the suicide bombing also left more than 50 other people injured. Hamas claimed responsibility for the suicide blast and a Hamas representative named Usamah Hamdan made the comments below when interviewed by Al-Jazeera television on March 6, 2001:

> The situation has been critical since the start of the settlement [peace] process. The siege imposed on our people continued even during that process. What exacerbated the situation was the Zionist repression and the Zionists’ refusal to recognize our Palestinian people’s rights. Today all the Palestinian people say that resistance is their sole legitimate option. This is not an emotional political attitude. It is an attitude based on two issues. The first is that the settlement talks did not return any rights to our people. On the contrary, they harmed the Palestinian cause and sought to guarantee security for the enemy. The other issue is that under a government formed by the hawks and doves – doves whom we were told are seeking to achieve peace – our people fully realized that there is no alternative to resistance. Despite all the suffering, these people are prepared for endurance, perseverance, and sacrifice. This is a clear indication that only resistance can lead to results. All else will only be harmful to our Palestinian cause.

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9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.
As Hamdan mentioned above, the principal reason the Palestinians continued to attack the Israelis via suicide bombings was because of the Israeli occupation and the unwillingness of Israel to grant Palestinians certain inalienable human rights. With grim hopes of peace in the region and a continued Israeli presence in their homeland, the Palestinian people were left with little choice except to fight back. Another Hamas statement in regards to this attack said, “The blood of our women and children will not go to waste, and al-Kassam brigades’ response will always be quick and painful.”

Just as Palestinian suicide bombs kill innocent people, so too do Israeli tanks and Apache helicopters. The suicide bombings were in direct response to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and unfortunately the attacks caused many Israeli casualties but not nearly as many casualties as the Palestinians suffered at the hands of the Israeli occupation. Hamas suicide bombers killed numerous innocent Israelis throughout the Arab-Israeli conflict but a much larger number of Palestinians lost their lives at the hands of the Israeli occupation. The statistics illustrate that 7,978 Palestinian civilians have lost their lives from the beginning of the First Intifada in 1987 through 2010, compared to only 1,503 Israeli citizens who lost their lives. The back and forth


attacks were a vicious, repetitive cycle that caused an overwhelming amount of bloodshed and created a staggering death toll for the Palestinians and the Israelis alike, but the Palestinian civilian death toll is staggeringly more than five times that of the Israeli death toll. Significant terror resides on both sides of the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict; although the Palestinians have suffered more than five times the civilian losses than that of the Israelis. This presents the question of who is suffering the most from this terror. Is it the Palestinians who suffer under a repressive Israeli occupation or the Israelis who live in fear of the Hamas suicide bomber? Regardless of what you believe, this conflict needs to be resolved sooner rather than later to avoid more bloodshed.

**Yehuba Pedestrian Mall Suicide Attack: December 1, 2001**

In terms of suicide terrorism during the Second Intifada, the first incident I will discuss that proves the attacks were political in nature, is the attack that occurred on December 1, 2001, when two suicide bombers blew themselves up at the Yehuba Pedestrian Mall in Jerusalem’s Zion Square. The attacks killed 11 people and injured approximately another 170. One of the men who orchestrated the attack, Nabil Halbiyeh, was preparing to get married shortly before the attack occurred and for all intents and purposes was considered by many a normal person and hardly an obvious

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candidate for suicide terrorism. A cousin and neighbor, Abdullah Halabiye, who was close to Nabil described him as:

An outgoing local hero whose room was a collection of posters of famous sportsmen, karate medals and personal trophies he earned as a star midfielder for the Abu Dis soccer club. A popular, gregarious young man who was not particularly religious and could stay up to all hours of the night watching World Cup games on television. ‘His life was sport,’ said Abdullah. ‘He started playing soccer as soon as he learned to walk.’

Abdullah continued on paraphrasing:

Nabil was probably not motivated to kill Israelis by religion. ‘He wasn’t an extremist, he wasn’t particularly religious and he wasn’t intolerant,’ said Abdullah. He worked sometimes as a guard for various churches in Jerusalem and Bethany, for example. ‘What really prepared him for this operation was the occupation. It’s a fertile ground for such actions and it will encourage hundreds of others to do the same thing.’

Unfortunately, suicide bombings had become an all too acceptable response directed at Israel’s occupation during the time of the attacks. This evidence is shown by poll numbers indicating that 80 percent of Palestinian respondents supported suicide attacks against Israeli civilians at the time. The occupation of Palestinian land and the repression of its citizens by Israeli forces clearly motivated people to do things they would not have normally done, such as resorting to suicide terrorism. The bombers tried to make political statements, since they felt repressed under Israeli occupation, and that is why they chose to blow themselves up and kill innocent Israeli civilians. It was not religion that motivated them, but the ability to make a violent, political


17 Ibid.
statement that would hopefully liberate the Palestinian people from the grip of the Israelis. Political considerations are therefore the main reason all of these suicide attacks transpired.

**Netanya Park Hotel Passover Seder Suicide Attack: March 27, 2002**

Another attack that demonstrates the political undertone behind all of these suicide attacks happened on March 27, 2002, when a suicide bomber blew himself up at the Passover Seder in the Park Hotel in Netanya. The murder of 30 Israelis and the wounding of 152 others was the deadliest attack in the state’s history. It occurred while they were celebrating the Seder meal in a hotel restaurant. The orchestrator of the terror network responsible for the attack, Abbas al-Sayyid, now imprisoned, stated years after the attack that, “We acted to extract the price of occupation from the Israelis, and to make it also pay the costs and not only derive the benefits.” He admitted that Hamas did not expect Israel to respond with such great force throughout the resistance struggle, and that the organization suffered heavy losses and that the Palestinian people were caused great suffering, but he also said, “The price that we extracted from Israel was worth it. The fact is that Israel eventually withdrew from Gaza. That is the result of our struggle.” He justified the acts of murder that Hamas

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19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.
carried out against Israeli civilians in the guise of a moral struggle for liberation and gave clear and consistent expression to his ideological and political stand, as well as that of his organization, making it clear that the motivation behind the numerous suicide bombings he helped to construct were political in nature, as almost all of them were.\textsuperscript{22}

\textit{Haifa Matza Restaurant Suicide Attack: March 31, 2002}

Another attack that clearly displays the political motivation behind suicide terrorism is an attack that occurred on March 31, 2002, at the Matza restaurant in the Israeli port city of Haifa.\textsuperscript{23} At least 14 people were killed and approximately 40 were injured in the suicide blast.\textsuperscript{24} Haifa is one of the few towns in Israel where both Arabs and Jews lived together in harmony, and it had prided itself on the spirit of coexistence. Sadly, for the Arab and Israeli victims of this suicide attack, the bomber was concerned only with his political aspiration of liberating Palestine from the Israelis rather than the spirit of coexistence between both the Arabs and the Jewish people. The attacker’s ability to indiscriminately kill both Muslims and Jews, shows that politics were at the center of his agenda, just as with most other suicide attacks, and that the primary motive was not religion, nor anything else for that matter.

\textsuperscript{22} Ma-ariv, “Report on Conversations with Hamas,” \textit{Ma-ariv}, April 06, 2007.

\textsuperscript{23} Yoav Appel, “Changes Dateline from Jerusalem; Suicide Bomber Attacks Crowded Israeli Restaurant in Israeli Port City of Haifa; at least 12 killed,” \textit{Associated Press}, March 31, 2002.

\textsuperscript{24} The Independent, “Sharon Declares Israel is at ‘War’ After 14 Killed in Suicide Bombing,” \textit{The Independent}, April 1, 2002.
The Islamic militant group Hamas said it carried out the attack to avenge Israel’s incursion into the West Bank town of Ramallah. ‘We will continue the martyrdom attacks on Israel until the full withdrawal from Palestinian territory,’ Hamas announced over mosque loudspeakers in the West Bank refugee camp in Jenin.25

Tel Aviv Bus Suicide Attack: September 19, 2002

On September 19, 2002, after a brief lull of six weeks, Iyad Na’im Subhi Radad, walked into a line for a bus in Tel Aviv and detonated his ‘human explosive.’26 The results of the attack left five people dead, in addition to the suicide bomber himself, and injured at least 50 others.27 Immediately following the attack a senior political leader of Hamas named Abdel Aziz Rantisi declared, “The martyr operations will continue against the Zionists. We are defending our people. The resistance will escalate.”28 Again, this illustrates, just like the other suicide attacks, that the attack was political in nature. The attacks represented the Palestinian resistance against their Israeli oppressors. In the few weeks preceding the suicide attack there were some new political and diplomatic initiatives that had stirred hopes that the violence over the past two years was winding down, but the occupation over Palestine was still very apparent which resulted in this suicide attack. Israeli officials insisted that the lull was largely


26 Joshua Mitnick and Keith Sinclair, “People Were Hurting, Screaming, the Driver Was in His Seat…Dead; Terror Back on Streets Lulled into Normality,” The Herald, September 20, 2002.

27 Ibid.

due to the result of the severe clampdown and daily raids in the West Bank and Gaza.\textsuperscript{29}

In those same six weeks, Palestinian officials said 75 Palestinians were killed in the Israeli operations, most of them civilians, and several Israelis were also killed in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.\textsuperscript{30} The murder of 75 innocent Palestinians at the hands of Israeli forces seemed hardly like an attempt to bring peace to the region. The Israelis behaved as if the Palestinians were a lesser people than them, and not only violated their human rights, but had the audacity to kill more innocent people. Hamas is clearly a terrorist organization, and there is no denying that, but it appears the Israelis were reigning terror over the entire Palestinian population just as well. One cannot justify suicide terrorism, but perhaps one can begin to understand how the Israeli treatment of Palestinians influenced certain hopeless Palestinians down the path to suicide terrorism as a last resort aimed at liberating Palestine from Israel’s grasp.

\textit{Haifa Bus Suicide Attack: March 5, 2003}

On March 5, 2003, a suicide bomber blew himself up on a crowded bus in the northern Israeli coastal city of Haifa resulting in mass casualties.\textsuperscript{31} At least 15 people were killed in the blast and upwards of 55 were wounded.\textsuperscript{32} The bloody blast which ripped the roof of the bus off and scattered body parts throughout the street was


\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{31} Sonja Pace, “Suicide Bombing Kills 15 in Haifa, Israel,” \textit{Voice of America}, March 5, 2003.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
deemed a, “… fitting response to the loss of innocent lives in Gaza,” by Dr. Mahmud al-Zahhar, a Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip.\textsuperscript{33} The Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo had a different take on the incident and issued a statement condemning the attack stating, “… it only serves to distract attention from the many Palestinian civilians killed in Israeli security operations in the last two months.”\textsuperscript{34} Israel’s response to this attack went beyond the usual actions: the demolition of homes, sealing off of borders, a ban on the Palestinian movement throughout the occupied territories, and restrictions of everyday Palestinian life. According to witnesses, the very next day, March 6, 2003, an Israeli helicopter fired a missile into a crowd of Palestinians who were watching firefighters putting out a blaze started by Israeli troops in a night raid on a refugee camp.\textsuperscript{35} Doctors reported 11 people dead and at least another 30 critically injured with the total injured exceeding 100 people.\textsuperscript{36} The raid on the crowd in the Gaza Strip was the latest in a series of bloody tank and helicopter incursions designed to root out “terrorist infrastructure” in the area.\textsuperscript{37} Sadly, eight Palestinians, including a pregnant woman were killed in the raid.\textsuperscript{38} The Israeli


\textsuperscript{34} Pace, “Suicide Bombing Kills 15,” \textit{Voice of America}, March 5, 2003.


\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
army said that most of the victims were armed terrorists and cases of wrongful or mistaken killings are thoroughly investigated.\textsuperscript{39} Palestinians claimed that many of the victims were unarmed civilians or stone-throwing youths. Israeli human rights groups said they were concerned by evidence that troops were getting more trigger-happy around the time of this raid. The March 6\textsuperscript{th} attack brought the Second Intifada death toll to more than 1,900 Palestinians and 720 Israelis.\textsuperscript{40} These statistics demonstrated an increased level of violence from the Israeli government during the Second Intifada, especially when compared to the Palestinian response to the occupation. It helps one understand how certain Palestinians justified the use of suicide terrorism to combat the occupation. The wrath of the occupation was not just a restriction on one’s life in Palestine but a potential death sentence at the hands of the Israeli Defense Forces. Unfortunately, the death toll would only skyrocket as the Second Intifada progressed forward. As mentioned earlier 7,978 Palestinian civilians lost their lives from the beginning of the First Intifada in 1987 through 2010, compared to only 1,503 Israeli citizens. The death toll was high for both sides, but it displayed quite a striking discrepancy with more than five times the amount of Palestinian deaths compared to that of the Israelis.

\textit{Looking Toward the Future of the Arab-Israeli Conflict}

Other politically-charged suicide attacks occurred on a consistent basis through 2008. The motive behind each and every attack mirrored the reasoning behind all of


\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
the attacks previously mentioned throughout this thesis. Suicide attacks were conducted to counter the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. Even though there have been no suicide attacks perpetrated by Hamas since 2008, the threat of violence and suicide attacks will continue to resonate unless the Arab-Israeli conflict is mutually resolved in a way that appeases the needs of both sides. Without a resolution to the Israeli occupation of Palestine the threat of violence will most certainly exist in the region for many years to come. Until the issues of Palestinian refugees, borders, security, Jerusalem, and expanding Israeli settlements are legitimately solved, the need to liberate Palestine from Israel’s control will be, like it always has been, at the forefront of all future suicide attacks and violence in Israel and occupied Palestine. In the final chapter I will not only recap the politics of the occupation that have led to so many Hamas-inspired suicide terrorist acts committed against the Israelis over the years, but I will also look to the future of the Arab-Israeli conflict and explore some potential changes in Israeli policy directed toward Palestine that could solidify a peaceful solution to the conflict and put an end to additional bloodshed for Arabs and Jews alike.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

The examples of suicide terrorism that occurred from 1993 to 2008, illustrate that political motivation is not only the primary driver of the Hamas suicide bomber, it is also the key to the entire Arab-Israeli struggle itself. Hamas orchestrated suicide attacks were strictly conducted against the state of Israel to contest the occupation of Palestine. The people of Palestine had their land taken away from them by the Israelis, and many Palestinians were forced into refugee camps where conditions were quite atrocious. The Israelis not only removed Palestinians from their land and their homes, but they still continue to treat the Palestinians as second class citizens through their policy of occupation. Palestinians have been bound by these constraints under occupation throughout the Arab-Israeli conflict: a restriction from travelling freely throughout the region, Israeli curfews that must be adhered to in order to avoid Israeli brutality, the demolition of Palestinian homes to make way for Israeli settlements, and consistent arrests, detainment, and torture.

With additional, extremely harsh Israeli policies and conditions such as: the enormous security barrier wall preventing workers from getting to their jobs, an everyday military presence in Palestinian towns and villages that harasses and intimidates, the war in Ramallah and Gaza, and continuous settlement growth in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, one can understand how an organization such as Hamas could convince its members to carry out violent attacks, not to mention suicide terrorist attacks against the Israelis from 1993 to 2008 in order to try and eliminate this
political occupation of its land. The dreadful conditions that Palestinians are forced to live under surely does not justify suicide terrorism, but one should be able to at least sympathize with the Palestinian plight and suffering they are forced to endure on a day to day basis. Hamas’s response only made the dilemma between the Palestinians and the Israelis worse, but one can understand how their hopelessness drove them into this dark direction. Hamas suicide terrorism was a responsive, retaliatory form of behavior that was enacted in order to undo the suppression and oppression that made each and every day of Palestinian life under Israeli occupation a significant struggle for all of those affected by it.

There is a common misconception that groups like Hamas utilized suicide terrorism predominantly to launch jihad, and that suicide terrorism was just a fanatical religious act. This is not the case. Many in Hamas suggested, despite its proclamation of jihad, that it was not engaged in a holy war against the Jews or Christians. “For us as Muslims it is not a religious war because we lived together here before 1948,” said Sheikh Saleh al-Arouri, a leader of the military wing of Hamas who had emerged from 15 years in an Israeli prison.¹ He went on to defend the argument that the suicide attacks were undertaken in direct response to Israeli’s occupation of Palestine by stating:

Christians have been living here since the start of the ages. If it were a religious war the Jews and Christians would not have lasted 1,400 years. Religious war means what happened in Europe in the Middle Ages where they didn’t accept anyone who wasn’t a Christian. In our area there was never a genocide based on

religion. This is only a nationalistic issue and a nationalistic war because of occupation.\footnote{Milton-Edwards and Farrell, \textit{Hamas}, 15.}

His statements help to solidify the argument that the suicide attacks were politically inspired and aimed at resisting or ending the Israeli oppression of the Palestinian people.

As mentioned previously, it is apparent that the Hamas attackers who struck at Israel via suicide attacks were terrorists, but one can also conclude that the Palestinians were, and still are, being terrorized by the Israelis. Without the terror of the occupation, the members of Hamas insisted there would be no reason for suicide attacks directed at Israel. Throughout the entire Arab-Israeli conflict, members and leaders of Hamas consistently mentioned that it was the occupation that drove them to commit such ghastly acts of suicide terrorism. The Palestinians were not a ruthless or irrational people, but they were, and still are, a people that were persistently repressed, which led some of them, specifically Hamas, to suicide terrorism. Without the unfortunate political situation of occupation that still exists in Palestine today, many lives would have been saved and suicide terrorism would not even be an issue between Palestinians and Israelis. Suicide terrorism was a response utilized to combat the Israeli occupation that beleaguered Palestinians for many years, and it will continue to plague them for many more years unless a viable solution can be agreed upon that is both fair and equal to the Palestinians and Israelis alike.

As discussed throughout this thesis, political motivation was the key ingredient
for almost every suicide attack that ever occurred, especially when it came to the suicide attacks conducted by Hamas. The overall political inspiration behind the suicide attacks was to end the occupation. All of the examples presented were directly or indirectly connected to that ultimate goal. The violence afflicting both Israel and Palestine could be terminated with an agreement to end the occupation and an arrangement on borders, refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, and security that appeases both parties. Until this happens though, the region will most likely continue to be overwhelmed with violence, while also living in fear of potential suicide attacks.

The overwhelming majority of the examples of suicide terrorism orchestrated by Hamas had similar types of political demands attached to them, and most of the attacks resulted in innocent Israeli deaths and strict punishments imposed on the entire Palestinian population. Almost every time a suicide attack occurred, Israel punished the Palestinians by sealing off the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to ensure Israeli safety. This type of behavior caused great feelings of anger and resentment on behalf of many innocent Palestinians who just wanted to get to work or travel freely from place to place in their homeland. The enormous barrier wall that exists, separating Israel from the occupied territories, makes the ordinary trip for a Palestinian worker extremely treacherous with the potential of being shot or arrested, even though Israel maintains that the wall has dramatically reduced the number of suicide attacks. Israeli aggression towards uninvolved family members of Hamas bombers who attacked the Israelis, such as the destruction of family member’s homes and the unwarranted arrests of unaffiliated family members occurred quite frequently as retaliation for the attacks.
This retaliatory behavior encouraged future acts of violence and aggression and led to more hostility. Each retaliatory reaction from either side only served to make things worse, further exacerbating the situation, and ultimately leading to more political ramifications and violence throughout the region.

**Israeli Policy Recommendations to End Violence and Bring Peace**

After a careful analysis of the sampling of Hamas orchestrated suicide attacks perpetrated against Israel one can sufficiently determine that the suicide bomber was a politically stimulated weapon utilized to defeat the occupation of Israel on the Palestinian lands of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The ‘human explosive’ was favored as the ‘weapon of choice,’ because it was perceived as the only viable weapon that the Palestinians could amass against a Middle Eastern power. Israel had the military might to swiftly destroy Palestine if it wanted to, as well as strong support from the U.S. Each example of suicide terrorism mentioned throughout this thesis, as well as almost every other example of suicide terrorism ever perpetrated by Hamas in response to Israel’s occupation had and continues to have similar goals. Most specifically, the goal is to end Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land. Robert Pape believes:

> The central fact is that overwhelmingly suicide-terrorist attacks are not driven by religion as much as they are by a clear strategic objective: to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from the territory that terrorists view as their homeland. From Lebanon to Sri Lanka to Chechnya to Kashmir to the West Bank, every major suicide-terrorist campaign—more than 95% of all the incidents—has had as its central objective to compel a democratic state to withdraw.³

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³ Scott McConnell, “The Logic of Suicide: Interview with Robert Pape,” *The American*
In a region that has been marred by political strife, violence, humanitarian struggles, terrorism, and an Arab-Israeli conflict; there is a much greater likelihood for peace if there is: an end to the Israeli occupation in Palestine, the penultimate withdrawal of Israeli troops from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, an abandonment of all Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands, and a lack of interference from Israel in Palestinian affairs when related to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The peace that has eluded the Middle East for so many years may very well have a chance if both parties would be willing to legitimately negotiate on the above issues.

Innocent Palestinians can no longer afford to live in a region with an Israeli military presence that creates border blockades, checkpoints, and a wall that prevents them from traveling freely throughout society. The growth of the economy is also severely stunted, and the ability to get common staple goods is a major issue for Palestinians due to the occupation. Israel must open the borders so that Palestinians can get their economy rejuvenated. Additionally, Israel must put an end to its expanding settlements that continue to take more and more Palestinian land. Obviously, this is a mutual burden and Hamas must immediately reduce its violent behavior, such as eliminating the use of suicide bombers that threaten innocent Israeli lives. Fortunately, there have been no suicide attacks perpetrated by Hamas since 2008, so there may be hope after all, even if it is just a glimmer.

Although peaceful coexistence between Israel and Hamas is clearly not possible under the formulations that comprise Hamas’s 1988 charter, Hamas
has, in practice, moved well beyond its charter. Indeed, Hamas has been carefully and consciously adjusting its political program for years and has sent repeated signals that it may be ready to begin a process of coexisting with Israel.4

In order for the violence to subside and the threat of suicide terrorism to be completely eliminated, many of the restrictions imposed on the Palestinians by the Israelis will have to be eliminated. Only then will a possible peace be forged between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The end of the relentless Israeli occupation will bring genuine freedom to all Palestinians, and it will likely bring peace to a region that has been marred by political strife, extreme violence, and suicide terrorism for all too long now.

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