Social-Civilian Apparatuses of Hamas, Hizballah, and Other Activist Islamic Organizations

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to examine the social-civilian activities of activist Islamic organizations in general, and of the Palestinian Hamas and Lebanese Hizballah in particular. As opposed to the common approach in academic and semiacademic publications, some of them aiming to promote political and propagandist goals, this article claims that the connection between the organizations’ social-civilian activities and their military and political apparatuses is not so close, although it does exist indirectly, and that these activities come first and foremost to answer religious commandments and social needs. This conclusion arises from examining the religious and historical roots of Hamas’s and Hizballah’s social-civilian apparatuses and from comparing them with those of parallel organizations that are nonviolent.

Many activist Islamic organizations operate—side by side with their military activity—a social-civilian wing, which gets the lion’s share of their budget. Thus, both the Hamas Sunni movement in the Palestinian Territories and the Hizballah Shi’ite organization in Lebanon separately operate a vast civilian infrastructure with a budget of tens of millions of dollars annually that comprises numerous activities and institutions that assist the population in every aspect of life: health (hospitals, clinics), education (schools, kindergartens, community and sport centers, and even universities), religion (mosques, Qur’an memorizing institutes), and welfare (delivery of financial and material aid).

By doing so, the Islamic organizations achieve two main goals: the first is an ideological-religious one—fulfilling the religious duty of zakat (alms) and the duty/custom of da’wa (inviting non-Muslims to Islam) that attracts the believers to Islam and whose goal is the resurgence of the ancient Islamic ideal (and indeed Hamas’s civilian apparatus is named—also by the movement itself—Hamas’s Da’wa apparatus). The second goal is a practical one—creating a base of supporters for the organizations’ activities, both the political-electoral and the military, and maintaining a logistic apparatus for their military activity.

The academic research in this field, and especially the journalistic and propagandist writings, has concentrated primarily on the latter goal and less on the former. These goals begin with the ancient Islamic scriptures, the Qur’an and the Hadith (the Islamic oral tradition), which sanctify the duty of charity and aid to the needy, the
values of social solidarity, and the establishment of social justice, and include the Muslim contemporary scholars, who constitute an inspiration and justification for the organizations.

Moreover, the common belief that is introduced and “proven” in these publications argues that organizations like Hamas and Hizballah operate their vast social-civilian apparatuses mainly for a utilitarian, almost cynical, reason: to support and back their armed wings, which allegedly present the essence of their existence. In other words, these organizations are accused, first and foremost, of being violent, and whose nonviolent activities are stained because of their allegedly close and direct connections to their military ones.

But these arguments ignore the fact that both Hamas and Hizballah Da’wa preceded terrorism. They also underestimate the ceaseless existence of Da’wa in Islam. Thus, other comparable Islamic movements in the region, the Muslim Brothers in Egypt and Jordan, do not act violently (at least not their central branches) while running vast social-civilian activities. Da’wa exists independently, without supporting any violent means.

This article will introduce the ideological and historical roots of Hamas’s and Hizballah’s social-civilian activity while comparing them with the two mentioned parallel organizations (as well as with another nonviolent one, the Israeli Islamic movement). The main goal is to show the complexity and diversity of these organizations as opposed to the one-dimensional and biased way in which they are sometimes introduced in the media and academic literature. However, we do not underestimate Hamas’s and Hizballah’s violent character (which is not the main topic of this article), nor do we entirely dismiss the connections between Da’wa and terrorism that do exist, but they need to be put in the proper context and extent.

**Historical and Religious Sources**

It has to be emphasized that social-civilian activity carried out by activist organizations is not a monopoly of Islamic organizations or of religious ones. Beyond the political ambitions of these organizations (violent or nonviolent) and their religious motives (if any), their focus on social-civilian activity also derives from social causes—the will to initiate social change (as the use of terror itself has a limited effect in creating political and social change). And as such, their social-civilian activity becomes integrated—or at least takes place simultaneously—with the activities of the Civil Society organizations, especially the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs operated in the Palestinian Territories and in Lebanon long before the appearance of Hamas and Hizballah during the 1980s as movements that use violent means in order to promote their political goals. The historical roots of Hamas began with the activity of the Muslim Brothers in Palestine in 1945 as a branch of the mother organization in Egypt. The Palestinian branch has been focusing throughout the years—during the British mandate era (until 1948), under the Jordanian and
Egyptian regimes (in the years 1948–1967), and after Israel took over the Palestinian Territories in 1967—in vast educational, social, and religious activities and has been operating numerous institutions for the welfare of the population. In general, the Palestinian Brothers avoided using violent measures. The move to an organized and overt violent pattern occurred almost overnight with the establishment of the Hamas movement after the breakdown of the violent uprising in the Territories (the Intifada) on December 1987, but simultaneously continues to fulfill the social responsibilities of the Brothers. Actually Hamas is the successor of the Muslim Brothers’ movement in Palestine, and by the early 1990s, Hamas had already taken control of a large part of the main social institutions that were identified with the Palestinian Brothers.

Hizballah was also founded in the 1980s, on the basis of religious, social, and educational activities carried out in the 1960s and the 1970s by the religious scholars Musa al-Sadr and Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, and from the beginning of the 1980s, by Iran. Al-Sadr was the charismatic leader of the Shi’ite sect in Lebanon who tried to make up for the prolonged political and social discrimination of its sect, a discrimination that is a consequence of—among others—the unique demographic and political structure of Lebanon. In Lebanon, Al-Sadr founded the al-Mahroumin movement (literally, the movement of the deprived)—a religious, social, and educational movement—and only later became a military wing added under the name of Amal organization (literally, hope), which was about to be one of the sources for Hizballah’s appearance (AbuKhalil, 1991, pp. 390–391).

Parallel to al-Sadr, Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, who was eventually going to be Hizballah’s spiritual leader (until the 1990s, when Iran forced him to move aside), also operated in Lebanon in the social, educational, and religious fields (Harik, 1994, p. 25). After the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps also initiated social and religious activities in Lebanon in order to promote the vision of an Islamic Caliphate, also in that country. At the same time, branches of the Iranian Bonyads—huge semigovernmental economic concerns whose goal was aiding the Iranian poor—were established in Lebanon. These branches were going to constitute the base for the establishment of Hizballah’s social institutions (Saeidi, 2004, p. 481).

Hamas’s and Hizballah’s social and religious roots are manifested also by their written ideologies and by the writings of some Muslim scholars who are spiritual guides for the organizations. Hamas relies on the meditation of Hassan al-Banna, who founded the Egyptian Muslim Brothers in 1928 and practiced the ideology he preached by establishing numerous social, religious, and educational institutions. Another Muslim scholar who inspires Hamas is the Qatar Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who dealt with the issue of Zakat in Islam (al-Qaradawi, 1969).

Hamas also relies upon the legacy of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the dominant spiritual leader of Hamas for many years (until he was killed by Israel in 2004) who preached—and also practiced during his long activity in the Palestinian Muslim Brothers organization—Islamic solidarity and aiding the needy. Similar values are
promoted in their ideology and practice by the spiritual fathers of Hizballah—Sheikh Fadlallah (1998, pp. 538–566) and the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini (1984, pp. 244–266), the instigator of the Islamic revolution—even though they represent Shi’ite Islam, as opposed to Hamas, which is a Sunni movement.

And indeed, there are no significant differences between Sunni and Shi’ite Islam in their attitude to the commandments of Islamic solidarity and aiding the needy. For all Muslims, Zakat is considered one of five pillars of Islam (al-Shiekh, 1995, p. 366). Zakat is an obligatory tax requiring each Muslim to donate a specific share of his capital and property for charity, and as such, it differs from other forms of giving and philanthropy, which are voluntary and called Sadaqa.

In addition to fulfilling the commandment of Zakat and the practice of Sadaqa, the Islamic organizations implement the practice of Da’wa as well. At its center, Da’wa is defined as a call, a religious propaganda, an activity aimed at strengthening Islam from inside by persuasion, and even at penetrating the non-Muslim world in order to Islamize it, by pleasant means and behavior if possible. Therefore, in this meaning, Da’wa can even be considered a kind of nonviolent Jihad. One of the Da’wa’s main modes of action in the modern ages is the voluntary activity, the social–humanitarian one.

It has to be emphasized that in addition to these Islamic commandments on which Islamic NGOs are based, their prosperity—as well as that of parallel secular NGOs that have become very widespread in the past half century—is also derived from some modern developments, such as the breakdown in urbanizing societies of traditional forms of solidarity. But different forms of Da’wa and voluntary associations are as old as Islam. Modern developments, including wide-scale terrorism, have created the advent of violent organizations, among them Islamic organizations that also run social activities. Whereas secular organizations do so mainly for utilitarian reasons, religious and especially Islamic ones also reap religious credits.

Hamas’s and Hizballah’s Social–Civilian Apparatuses

The vast social–civilian apparatuses established by Hamas and Hizballah in the Palestinian Territories and in Lebanon constitute an implementation in practice—although through adaptation to the modern age and to the specific geopolitical circumstances of the organizations’ surroundings—of the above Islamic commandments. Throughout the Palestinian Territories, Hamas is operating numerous charities and Zakat committees, constituting the foundation of the movement’s social–civilian apparatus, Da’wa, which indirectly brings the masses to Islam, like the goals of the “original” Da’wa. Each of these charities and committees runs religious, educational, and social institutions in the village or city where it operates: In the educational field (kindergartens, schools, enriching group activities, summer camps, and even universities), in the medical sphere (clinics and hospitals), in the religious field (mosques and Qur’an memorizing institutes), and in the welfare field. As part of
the latter, the charities and the committees distribute financial and material aid (such as basic food products, blankets and radiators during the winter, and clothes) throughout the year, and especially during times of economic crisis (e.g., after the Israeli army’s operations in the Palestinian Territories), for the Muslim holidays, and during the holy month of Ramadan.

In this manner, Hamas runs one of its biggest charities—the Islamic Society/Hebron (al-Jam‘iya al-Islamiya/al-Halil) in the city of Hebron in the West Bank. This charity also operates five branches in the district’s villages and focuses on the areas of welfare and education, especially the care of orphans and educating them according to the values of Islam.

The Hebron Islamic Society’s Web site (http://www.icshebron.org) recently commemorated 45 years of the society’s founding (many years before Hamas’s founding) and gave an overview of its impressive range of activities, among them current projects and a few planned ones (which are in need of financing), and elaborated on the possibility of “adopting” an orphan. The scope of its activities is quite big as compared with other Hamas societies in the Territories: 190 boys and 150 girls grow up in the society’s orphanages, and 1,700 male and female pupils learn (separately of course) in the society’s three main schools, taught by 85 teachers. The society supervises 51 Qur’an-memorizing institutes where 970 men and women study. More than 3,000 poor, needy, and orphaned families receive permanent financial aid from the society. In addition, they are granted special assistance during Ramadan (such as sacrifice-meat fast-breaking meals). During summer the society runs special activities (like summer camps), and 4,000 visitors come each month to the society’s al-Ibrahimiya library for children that houses no fewer than 18,000 books.

The social-civilian apparatus of Hizballah in Lebanon runs similar activities, although its structure is much more centralized than that of Hamas, because of three factors: the relative weakness of the Lebanese state-system, the interruption-free environment in which Hizballah operates (contrary to Hamas, whose social-civilian activity is interrupted almost daily by Israel and sometimes by the Palestinian Authority [PA]), and Hizballah’s focusing especially on the Shi‘ite population of Lebanon, which is concentrated in three main regions in the country—Southern Lebanon, the Beqaa Valley, and the capital Beirut—as opposed to Hamas, which assists the entire Palestinian population and is therefore required to operate throughout the Palestinian Territories. Because of these factors, Hizballah does not have committees providing complete services, each one in a defined district as does Hamas; instead, big institutions are operating nationwide, each one specializing in one field. Even though they have already been separated from Iranian funds, Iran continues to be their main financial source.

In this manner, Hizballah runs the Educational Unit, which is responsible for Hizballah’s educational institutions (kindergartens, schools) all around Lebanon, and especially in the Shi‘ite areas; the Islamic Health Authority al-Haya’a al-Sihiya (http://www.hayaa.org), which runs mobile and permanent medical clinics, blood-
donation mobile units, and hospitals; and The Islamic Imdad Charitable Committee, in memory of Iranian Imam Khomeini (http://www.alemdad.org), which constitutes a nationwide social organization.

Hizballah’s wide freedom of action relative to Hamas has enabled it to establish some institutions devoted to taking care of the organization’s families of wounded and dead cadres (the last ones called Shahids, meaning martyrs): the al-Shahid Institution, Mua’sasat al-Shahid (Danawi, 2002, pp. 29–68), and the Institution of the wounded, Mua’sasat al-Jarha (http://www.aljarha.org; Elias, 2006, Vol. 12, pp. 54–59; Hamzeh, 2004, pp. 52–53). This is contrary to Hamas, which assists its dead and wounded cadres’ families separately from the activity of its Da’wa committees (although they also assist prisoners, wounded cadres, and the “martyrs’” families, as part of assisting people in need in general).

In addition (and partly as a replacement for the weak Lebanese government), Hizballah runs a construction, repairing, and developing institution called Jihad al-bina’a’, The Construction Jihad (http://www.jihadbinaa.org; Danawi, 2002, pp. 69–104), which promotes large-scale projects in the fields of construction, agriculture, industry, and public services all around Lebanon, and especially in the Shi’ite areas.

Hizballah’s social-civilian activities, as well as its other types of activities (military, political), are financed mainly by Iran (either Iranian formal or semiformal institutions, such as the Bonyads). Hizballah’s other financial sources—commercial and criminal activity in Lebanon and throughout the world and donations by the Shi’ite Diaspora—are merely secondary sources and constitute only a minor share of Hizballah’s annual budget. Its total amount was estimated in the past at approximately $100–200 million22 and apparently has grown at an unknown rate since the 2006 Lebanon war (Levitt, 2007, pp. 134–151).

Contrary to Hizballah, the Hamas Da’wa movement (but not the Hamas government) has succeeded throughout the years in decentralizing its financial sources while reducing its dependence upon one source, especially on a state whose assistance may be affected by political developments. Thus, Hamas has succeeded in minimizing the financial shortcomings from which the movement suffered following the American and international war against terror launched after the 9/11 attacks. Some of Hamas’s financial sources were significantly restricted and even forbidden, with emphasis on some European funds belonging to Hamas,23 as well as Islamic funds in the Persian Gulf24 that assist Islamic organizations worldwide, including Hamas.

Some other financial sources of Hamas that are less important are commercial activity25 and Iran. The amounts of Iranian financial assistance to the Hamas movement are relatively small, while the Hamas government is probably heavily financed by the Iranians. The Hamas movement’s estimated annual budget is less than Hizballah’s and amounts to approximately $70–90 million,26 most of which is dedicated to the Da’wa infrastructure (Feiler, 1999, p. 9).

The differences between Hamas and Hizballah’s geopolitical surroundings and financial sources affect their different social-civilian apparatuses’ modes of action. For
example, while Hizballah’s different institutions openly declare belonging to the organization, Hamas’s societies in the Territories (or the foundations abroad that finance them) avoid revealing any connection to the movement. In spite of that, based on a few criteria—such as the identity of the societies’ activists; the society’s identification with Hamas in the eyes of the Israeli authorities, the PA, or the Palestinian public; the identity of the societies’ financial sources; and sometimes even the nature of the activities they run—we can attribute to Hamas many societies and committees in the Territories (and many educational, medical, and religious institutions that operate under their auspices). However, the absolute recognition of all of the Islamic institutions in the Territories with Hamas is one of the basic failures that characterize some academic and semi-academic publications dealing with the movement.

**Contradicting Some Other Misleading Beliefs**

Other failures concern the description of the activities Hamas societies initiate. For example, The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, an Israeli research institute that actually constitutes, without emphasizing it, a propaganda tool of the Israeli intelligence, prefers in its different publications that deal with the subject and are published in different languages on its Web site (http://www.terrorism-info.org.il) to shed light on the allegedly tight connection between Hamas’s societies and the movement’s military activities. Western researchers who lean on these publications also tend to exaggerate the importance of their arguments, such as regarding the societies’ assistance to the families of Hamas activists, prisoners, and dead and wounded cadres (an assistance given both directly, monetary and materially, and indirectly by means of supplying health, education, welfare, and religion services).

In addition, these publications often highlight Hamas’s alleged encouragement of the “martyrdom culture,” as it is called in these publications, not just by assisting the martyrs’ families but also through the educational content taught in the societies’ educational institutions. These arguments are based on documents that were captured by the Israeli army during raids carried out on Hamas’s societies and their subordinated institutions (including schools), as well as on the headquarters of the PA’s intelligence and security forces that were monitoring the societies’ activities. These publications also indicate that some of Hamas’s military activists are employed by the societies, and some of the societies’ leaders also have military roles, while others “just” maintain contacts with military activists.

Even though these arguments are anchored in reality (they are based on captured documents as evidence), it seems that the way they are used is sometimes tendentious and manipulative, and ignore the societies’ social, humanitarian, and religious roles. Thus, publications often ignore other examples of captured documents (and other sources of information about the societies’ activity, such as the Palestinian press, including newspapers affiliated with the PA) that illustrate that even—and
especially—*regular* bereaved families, including families of those who accidentally died through Israeli actions, receive assistance from the societies and that in general, there is no systematic preference of suicide bombers’ families as compared with others.  

Additionally, and even though incitement to hatred of Israel, and the encouragement of the martyrdom culture exists in Hamas’s educational institutions, the schools’ curriculum includes all the regular educational disciplines, with an emphasis on religious studies. Moreover, examples of military operatives becoming integrated into Hamas’s charitable committees are quite rare. Also, no clear-cut evidence of money transfers from committees to the military wing can be found; usually Hamas keeps a structural and financial separation between the two wings. However, this does not mean that Hamas does not assist military activities, even if it does so only indirectly. Hamas’s social efforts strengthen Hamas’s total power, including its military one. Hamas as a whole gets the population’s support because of the assistance its societies provide; thus, the movement has more public legitimacy to commit violent acts.

Clearly Hamas’s Da’wa is not totally separated from the movement’s other wings. There are connections among the different wings, but as a rule Hamas’s social-civilian wing is quite autonomous and aims at achieving, first and foremost, social and religious goals based on deep religious beliefs and historical roots. It should be emphasized that its encouragement and assistance of the military struggle against Israel are merely indirect, as a consequence of geopolitical circumstances and not of a rational preconceived decision. Very decisive assertions to the opposite are indeed based on documented evidence but ignore many others. By shedding light on just one aspect, which is not central, of Hamas’s Da’wa apparatus’ activity, they actually distort the entire picture.

Hizballah’s social institutions also exist, first and foremost, to fulfill religious and social goals; its social and military wings act separately, both structurally and financially, even though—similar to Hamas (even with greater vigor, as Hizballah acts in an interruption-free environment)—there are connections between the two wings. Salim Elias (2006) expressed the same views in his 12-volume book concerning Hizballah, a book that can be referred to as the semi-official biography of the organization:

The civilian institutions established by Hizballah played a central role in the success of the resistance [*muqawama* in Arabic, which is Hizballah’s nickname in general and its military wing’s name in particular] during the Jihad era and the struggle against the occupation until its ejection from the homeland in 2000 [referring to the Israeli military withdrawal from the “Security Zone” in southern Lebanon, which Israel held from the mid-1980s]. Hizballah’s commanders and seniors made it their priority to establish social institutions that would follow the military activity, because there could be no success for the resistance without having institutions to support its struggle, and from this postulation the
educational, religious and social institutions were established in order to ensure that the requirements of the strong stand [sumud in Arabic] against the occupation [will decrease] to the minimum. . . . These institutions provided most of the requirements of the inhabitants' strong stand inside the occupied zone and beyond it, in addition to taking care of the families of the fighters, the shahids and the prisoners, from the educational institutions . . . to the medical institutions that take care of the sick, the fighters wounded in the war and the handicapped, not to forget the other institutions. . . . And the media institutions in Hizballah have an important role which came into being during the occupation era by the Media Jihad. . . . (Vol. 12, p. 5)

Indeed, the connection between the social activity and the military one exits in most of Hizballah’s civilian institutions. In this manner, even the Jihad al-Bina’ name clearly illustrates the institution’s military nature (even though, as mentioned before, Jihad is not necessarily a violent struggle), as well as its efforts to renovate the battle areas in Southern Lebanon, also after the 2006 Lebanon war.

In August 2007, a year after the war ended, Jihad al-Bina’ published on its Web site a calculation of the cost of the projects it had already executed for Lebanon’s renovation after the war. The amounts that were stated were very high, such as assisting in finding housing for more than 28,000 cases at a total cost of about $134 million dollars (although it means that the average per house was just less than $5,000), reestablishing ruined houses which cost approximately $191 million, and the al-Waa’d project (http://www.waad-rebuild.com)—literally, a promise—for the reestablishment of the Dahiya (the district in Southern Beirut that constitutes Hizballah’s headquarters and was completely ruined during the war) costing approximately $14 million. According to a Jihad al-Bina’ report, the total cost of its projects to rebuild Lebanon during the first year after the war was approximately $381 million, money that came almost completely from Iran and exceeds, apparently significantly, Hizballah’s annual budget during routine times—evidence of the great efforts Hizballah and its patron make to renovate the country.36

Also, the Islamic Health Authority holds an important role as part of the armed struggle; during the Israeli military operations in Lebanon, it attempted to transport the wounded and bodies and assisted in defending the civilian population (Elias, 2006, Vol. 12, pp. 27–36). And of course, an important role was also played by the Wounded and the Shahid institutions, which constitute a kind of insurance for Hizballah activists (or more precisely, their families) and work simultaneously with Hizballah’s educational institutions to foster the “martyrdom culture.”

However, as with Hamas, it is hard to evaluate the share of Hizballah’s educational system, as well as the other services Hizballah provides, in the variety of components that bring Shi’ites to join the organization and become ready to risk and even sacrifice their lives. In Hizballah, the significance of the social component and its connections to the military activity are bigger than in Hamas, but in both organizations the
social-civilian institutions serve the military activity while simultaneously fulfilling additional social and religious goals. The historical roots of Hezbollah’s social activity, which precede the organization’s founding and the beginning of the military activities, illustrate that the social and religious goals are the original ones, while the military goals came later as a consequence of changing geopolitical circumstances.

**Da’wa and Politics**

Indeed, examining the connection between the social-civilian activities of Hamas and Hezbollah and their political activities reveals a complex and multidimensional picture as well. In both organizations the daily social-civilian activity contributes to the popularity of the organizations, also in the electoral field (as seen in Hamas’s clear victory in the 2006 elections for the PA’s legislative council). However, there are so many other variables that are hard to separate from the social activity and that bring the masses to support the organization and vote for it. Therefore, it is understandable why Hezbollah’s relative failure in the 2009 Lebanese elections does not necessarily indicate public disappointment with its voluntary efforts in social and economic sectors.

Nevertheless, Hezbollah does threaten to take control of Lebanon as a first step. As a rule, the organization has preferred to advance this goal via “quiet” efforts—social, religious, and educational ones (as opposed to the Iranian revolution model and despite Tehran’s insistence, which caused its rivalry with Hezbollah’s Sheikh Fadlallah). Some of the latest developments in Lebanon indicate that maybe this day may not be so far away. Taking care of the population over the years may convince them to support Hezbollah’s ambitions to rule either through elections or through a popular uprising (although some wonder if Hezbollah does not prefer to prolong its relatively comfortable oppositional status, where its social efforts are perceived as a bonus and not as a duty).

But meanwhile, a structural and financial separation is kept between the social-civilian and the political wings in Hezbollah, and moreover in Hamas. It is true that Hezbollah’s representatives in the Lebanese parliament try, and sometimes succeed, to recruit the state to finance activities that otherwise would have to be financed by Hezbollah, but their cost constitutes only a minor share of the organization’s annual budget (Hazi-Ashkenazi, 2001, pp. 53, 62, 69).

After Hamas’s 2006 election victory and its summer 2007 defeat of the Gaza Strip, Hamas’s Da’wa apparatus continues, as far as we know, to operate separately from Hamas’s government. Hamas government presides over the Gaza Strip and runs its own civilian apparatuses, while the Hamas movement continues, separately, to run its Gaza-wide Da’wa apparatus as it had in the past (the movement’s Da’wa infrastructure in the West Bank is no different, except for being supervised and sometimes interrupted by the PA). In Hamas’s view, the movement’s Da’wa apparatus will be maintained forever, while its political position as a ruler may be
temporary. Moreover, Hamas believes that mixing politics (in the Western secular sense) with Da’wa can be detrimental to the latter (and even more so when mixing terrorism with Da’wa, in light of the fact that one of Hamas’s primary financial sources are European funds, and today the European countries are much more aware of the potential connection between Da’wa and terrorism).

Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that Hamas has made a decision to distinguish between Da’wa and terrorism or secular politics for practical reasons.\textsuperscript{39} Nevertheless, as opposed to the secularism of the multipartisan politics in the Palestinian Territories or in Lebanon, politics in its broad meaning as interpreted by Islam is indeed an integral part of religion and of the being of every Islamic movement and Muslim believer. As Hamas’s senior member Mahmud al-Rumahi has stated, “For all Muslims, politics exists within the religion. They cannot be separated from each other. Politics is part of religion” (Ware, 2006).

Hamas, Hizballah, and every Islamic movement see their mission as a comprehensive one and therefore do not limit themselves merely to their military struggle or gaining political-electoral achievements. These movements’ goals are long term and aim at achieving an extensive religious and social change in the spirit of Islam. In their view, all the means—the military, the political, and especially the social—are aimed at this goal. For that reason the connection that sometimes does exist—more in Hizballah than in Hamas—between these means has not been created as a planned plot but evolved naturally, as part of the Islam being a comprehensive religion. As Naim Qassem, Hizballah’s vice president, stated,

The party [meaning Hizballah; as mentioned before, a party in the religious meaning of a group of believers and not its secular Western meaning] is a resistance and a politicized body, a liberator and a servant of the people, one working in the political, cultural, social, educational, parliamentarian and other spheres. It is therefore a party concerned with the plights of people at all levels, just as Islam draws the path for men at all levels. (Qassem, 2005, p. 204)

Some Parallel Test Cases

Our conclusions until now regarding Hizballah and especially Hamas receive more support when we examine the social-civilian activity of some other Islamic organizations, which are generally not violent. For example, the Muslim Brothers’ movement in Egypt, on whose ideology Hamas grew and which is active but not violent (at least not its central section) to this day; the Muslim Brothers’ movement in Jordan, which the 1967 war—during which Israel conquered the West Bank—cut functionally (but not ideologically) from the Muslim Brothers in Palestine; and the Islamic Movement in Israel (especially its separate northern branch, which is considered more extreme), which represents the fundamental trend among Israel’s Arabs, sometimes known also as the Israeli Palestinian inhabitants. These three movements, which grew from the same roots that spawned Hamas but have developed into different directions
(a consequence of different geopolitical environments), also run wide-scale social-civilian activities in the welfare, health, educational, and religious fields.

A widespread network of Islamic Da’wa institutions for the population operates in Egypt, although its identification with the Egyptian Muslim Brothers movement is mainly ideological and not structural or financial. This is a consequence of the serious obligations that were imposed by the Egyptian authorities on the Muslim Brothers in the last decades. Actually, the Egyptian Muslim Brothers movement has become a sort of amorphous movement; therefore, in Egyptian context it is better to refer to the activity of the Islamic trend as a complex lacking a political (but not ideological) regulator (Berger, 1970; Clark, 1995; Sullivan, 1994).

The involvement of the Egyptian Islamic trend, including the movement of the Muslim Brothers, in the political arena (even if indirectly), and especially the vast social support system they established, has changed the Egyptian society. Their activity constituted a functional factor in a process that occurred in the 1980s and the 1990s—a move of Islam from the periphery to the legitimate official center. From a subversive movement operated in the margins of society, banished and denounced by the other social forces (especially in the 1950s and the 1960s), the Islamic movement has gained approval—even if not officially—and become rooted in the heart of society. In this process the Brothers paid a high price, a de facto recognition of the secular regime and the multipartisan system (partly) and a concession to the violent mode of action as a mean for a change; but in return the Brothers gained the unofficial status of the carrier of the Islamic ideology flag in the Egyptian state. In their practice, the Muslim Brothers fulfill Hassan al-Banna’s heritage spirit and the principles of Islam.

As opposed to their Egyptian brothers, the Muslim Brothers in Jordan are securely established as an official and tangible movement, the Society of the Muslim Brothers (registered from the beginning as a charitable society), because of the relatively free rein they receive from the Jordanian authorities, a consequence of the Brothers’ avoidance of violence and a prolonged strategic alliance—even if not free of ups and downs—between the Brothers and the royal family.

Most of the Jordanian Muslim Brothers’ social institutions and activities in the welfare, health, educational, and cultural fields are concentrated under the society of the Islamic Center, the largest among Jordanian Islamic societies (excluding the societies that were established by the royal family). It received permission to operate in 1963 and serves as the social arm of the Brothers. The Islamic Center’s activities grew significantly during the 1970s, similar to the strengthening of status of the Jordanian Muslim Brothers in general. Nowadays, the center runs a vast system of educational institutions, from kindergartens to schools, that focus—in addition to the Jordanian official Jordanian curriculum—on Islamic educational contexts, such as intensive Qur’an lessons. Additionally, the center also runs a hospital, clinics, orphanages, and professional training centers and awards students’ scholarships and financial and material assistance to poor families (Wiktorowicz, 2001, pp. 101–102).
The activity of the Jordanian Muslim Brothers illustrates again that violent means or political-electoral desires are not necessarily a daily occurrence of Islamic movements. Since 1967, when a military regime was established in the kingdom and the Brothers were prohibited from running political activities, they had no choice but to turn all of their attention to the religious and social fields. And when they were allowed again to participate in the elections in the late 1980s as part of King Hussein’s political reforms and democratization process, the Brothers and the Islamic trend gained electoral achievements and thus picked the fruits of their prolonged social investment. But this does not mean that this was the motive for their activity; as was clearly stated by one of the employers in Amman’s Islamic hospital, of which the Islamic Center is so proud,

Our success is in building a practical model for how Islam can serve. It has raised the confidence of the community that Islam can solve people’s problems. That is why people now support the Islamic movement and this is reflected. Poor people, especially those served by the hospital, they pay us back in elections. . . . The hospital has influenced them. . . . This influence is not direct. We do not require that people either support the movement or we will not help. . . . It is not a requirement that they become members of the Muslim Brotherhood. They voluntarily find themselves morally indebted to the movement. . . . When the movement is in elections or needs support, they repay the debt. (Wiktorowicz, 2001, pp. 108–109)

In order to avoid possible damage to the Brothers’ social-civilian apparatus if the royal house again imposes restrictions on political activity, the Brothers officially announced early in 1994 a separation between the Society of the Muslim Brothers and the Islamic Action Front, which is the clear political representative of the Brothers. In other words, the Brothers decided to continue their way of becoming integrated in the secular political system but chose to separate it—officially and in practice—from the Da’wa in order to avoid possible damage to the Da’wa.

The Islamic Movement in Israel is another object for comparison with Hamas and its social activities. It is another example of an Islamic movement that provides social services to the population, acts under a secular regime, and participates in the political game, totally (the southern branch whose representatives sit in the Israeli parliament) or partially (the northern branch that boycotted the general elections but took part, in the past, in the municipal democratic elections). As opposed to Hamas, the Israeli Islamic Movement avoids using violent means, and similarly to Hamas, although to a lesser extent, the Islamic Movement also integrates in Palestinian motives its Islamic identity. Similar to Hamas, the Islamic Movement runs numerous charitable societies and institutions in the fields of education, health, welfare, and religion.

On a few occasions during the last years, the charismatic leader of the Islamic Movement’s northern branch, Sheikh Raed Salah, revealed his ambitious plan to
establish “an independent society” (al-Mujtama’ al-A’samy), a long-term and multileveled project that will include the establishment of autonomous institutions that will be united under one umbrella organization and concern all fields of life (including, in future plans, factories, commercial companies, dairy barns, agricultural companies, independent local banks, hospitals, schools for all ages, and more). All this in order to build a society that will have the power and ability to organize the institutions and daily matters of the Arab citizens without being dependent on the Israeli authorities. Salah believes that it is only through this project that “the Islamic idea can succeed as a minority governed in the ‘Palestinian interior’ (which is a pejorative expression for Israel); this project is a mechanism of protection against the westernization attempts, the globalization and the destruction of the Islamic traditions and values in Israel; the project has a potential of revitalization, awakening and resurrection of the Islamic norms . . .” (Ali, 2006, pp. 129–143).

Conclusion

These three comparative case studies—the Muslim Brothers in Egypt and in Jordan and the Islamic Movement in Israel—prove that different environments cannot change the social directives that are at the root of fundamental Islam. In the three parallel arenas—Egypt, Jordan, and Israel—the local Islamic movements were all established as social-religious movements, and they (at least their central forms) usually avoided turning into violent modes of action. The three movements were forced to fit in their religious principles with the given political circumstances (a secular and non-Islamic regime, which in Israel is not even Muslim) and choose to combine between Da’wa and political activity (in its secular meaning), the last according to the authorities’ restrictions (especially in Egypt but also in Jordan) and to the intraorganizational balance of power between pragmatics and radicals. The military mode of action used by Hamas (and Hizballah) is not the most important but is just one means among others to achieve religious and social long-term goals. It is to the same goals of all the social-civilian activities of all Islamic movements, whoever and wherever they are.

The social-civilian apparatuses of Hamas, Hizballah, and other Islamic movements offer their supporters and the entire public a religious alternative to the parallel services of the secular state. The creation of a complete alternative is a long-term process, and even shortcuts, such as Hamas’s takeover of the Gaza Strip, cannot fulfill it overnight. This is even more so in Jordan and in Egypt, where the limitations of the secular regime and the partial democracy, at least until lately, have turned the vision of its complete fulfillment into a utopian dream. The partial (for the moment) alternative offered by the movements enable them to stay necessary even in terms of abstaining from the military or political (secular-meaning) mode of action.

The Islamic character of this alternative and its being altruistic—based on a free will and not because it is a governmental duty—constitutes one of the reasons why
the influence of the Islamic movements’ welfare apparatuses is bigger than their relative power (the simple data show that Hamas’s and Hizballah’s assistance is much less than that given by the local governments or the Western NGOs operating in the Palestinian Territories and in Lebanon). For the Muslim believer, the 50 dollars’ assistance given by Hamas’s Hebron Islamic Society or Hizballah’s Imdad in Lebanon has no less importance than the 200 dollars given by UNRWA, USAID, or the governmental ministry for social affairs in the PA or in Lebanon. The latter does what it must according to its duties and fulfills the materialistic needs of the population whereas the services offered by Hamas’s or Hizballah’s social institutions in the fields of welfare, education, health, and religion are considered a bonus and an altruistic deed and answer also the spiritual needs of the believers, both the beneficiaries and the donors.

Whoever seeks the real source of power of Hamas, Hizballah, and other Islamic movements will find it in their daily activity of assisting the needy, educating the young generation, and assimilating religious values. This activity, which requires most of the organizations’ budgets and accompanies the Muslim from birth to death, is the core of their work, and at its base this activity is free of political-electoral or military considerations. The fact that it also indirectly serves these goals does not indicate that this is a conspiracy in which doing good aims just at doing bad. This common image of Hamas and Hizballah and similar organizations is just one example of the sometimes unilateral way in which Western eyes see these complex and multidimensional organizations in particular, and Islam in general.

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Notes

1. While Hizballah’s civilian apparatus has not been awarded a specific term.
2. For instance, the Irish Republican Army (IRA)—a secular freedom organization (although its struggle in the name of the Catholics in Northern Ireland against the Protestants took a clear religious form)—heavily assisted the families of the organization’s activists and prisoners, both socially and financially. Other activist organizations that carry out social-civilian activities are the Basque Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain, a secular national freedom organization that denies the Catholic Church’s hierarchy and runs schools and cultural projects in the Basque region; the Viet Cong, the South Vietnamese guerilla organization that fought against the U.S. army and operated groups of youth, women, peasants, workers and students, and welfare organizations for the families of the Viet Cong’s dead cadres, educational projects, and more; and the Colombian Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), which sponsors projects for the population’s comfort, such as road building and repairing, and provides protection for the people.
3. There is disagreement among the scholars if it is correct to group together legitimate social organizations operating according to the democratic rules and activist organizations willing
to promote a political change using illegal and antidemocratic measures. This disagreement derives especially from the organizations’ terrorist-military activity and not from their social-civilian one. The latter definitely belongs to the category of “Civil Society,” a term that comes to illustrate civil extra (but not necessarily anti) governmental associations that include societies and unions, clubs, religious institutions, and other forms of organizations operating in the civil sphere not just for their own sake (or interests), but for the entire population (or at least for wide sectors of it). One of the precise definitions of this term is “associations of people constituting the public sphere (as distinguished from the private) other than the sphere of the state” (Sajoo, 2002, p. 61).

4. See, for example, the following lexicons (although usually they do not explicitly differentiate between Islamic charities and “secular” ones): al-Jami’yat al-Khairiya fi a-Difa al-Filastinya wa-Quta’ Gaza (the charity committees in the Palestinian Bank and Gaza Strip) (al-Hourani, 1988); Dalil al-Jami’yat al-Khairiya, 1980 (the charity committees handbook, 1980) (the union of the charity committees in the Nablus district and the region of Jenin, 1980).

5. As stated by the Hamas’s charter, as well as by its leaders, such as Ismail Abu-Shaneb, “It is mentioned even in the covenant of Hamas that is the strong arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. We consider it as an extension of the Islamic Movement in Palestine. The Islamic Movement (aka Hamas) has the Muslim Brotherhood ideology. . . . We resist Israeli different means of occupation in many aspects: educational, social, economic and military” (Freund, 2002, p. 30). See also what was written in the same vein in a memo prepared by the Hamas Political Bureau in 2000: “Hamas is the intellectual and dynamic successor of Jama‘at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin [the Muslim Brotherhood] in Palestine, whose foundations were laid down in the 1930s and 1940s when Ikhwan branches [meaning Islamic societies later assimilated within the Palestinian Muslim Brothers’ activity] were founded in Yaffa, Haifa, Jerusalem, and Gaza . . .” (Tamimi, 2007, p. 271).

6. Evidence for that was brought in an article that was published in April 1995 by the al-Wasat newspaper and dealt with a plan of the PA to fight against Hamas by drying out the movement’s financial sources. This plan consisted of renewing the PA’s control over the Zakat committees, which, according to the PA’s opinion, “Hamas had been gaining control of in the previous three years by inserting its supporters to their boards and delivering the committees’ money to specific projects and institutions operating for Hamas, such as orphanages, handicapped centers, parents’ homes and schools in which studying is free of charge” (al-Wasat, 1995, April 10).

7. For a detailed description of al-Sadr’s social activities in Lebanon, see http://www.imamsadrfoundation.org.lb (this foundation continued operating after al-Sadr’s disappearance in 1978).

8. The climax of Fadlallah’s social activity was Jami’yat al-Mabarat al-Khairiya (Mabarat association; mabarat in Arabic means kindness, generosity), still operating in Lebanon (http://www.mabarrat.org.lb).


10. See, for example, the twenty-first article of Hamas’s charter: “Social solidarity consists of extending help to all the needy, both materially and morally, or assisting in the execution of certain actions. It is incumbent upon the members of the Hamas to look after the interests of the masses the way they would look after their own interests” (http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/www.thejerusalemfund.org/carryover/documents/charter.html)
11. The beginning of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers’ social activities is described autobiographically by al-Banna himself in his book *Mud’aqarat al-Da’wa wal-Da’iya* (“the memories of the Da’wa and the Da’wa operator,” meaning the preacher, the one who attracts followers to Islam) in the following words:

I came back to Cairo [before the Muslim Brothers were established], and the Islamic societies had not been spread in Cairo as it is today, and there was nothing but a society named “Maqarim al-Akhlaq al-Islamiya” [the Islamic Virtues] . . . that organized Islamic lectures. (al-Banna, 1986, pp. 55–56)

Al-Banna describes how he thought about establishing an Islamic Da’wa:

I was wondering—thinking about how good Islamic values are disintegrating and how people are distancing themselves from those values in Cairo—that the mosques themselves are not sufficient for the religious doctrines to reach the people . . . and I thought to call [from the word Da’wa] to establish a group of students from al-Azhar [Institute] and from Dar al-Ulum [the house of sciences] that would practice preaching and guiding in mosques and then in coffee shops and the public gathering places, and then we would establish from them a group that would spread in the villages, the rural areas and the main cities in order to spread the Islamic Da’wa . . . (al-Banna, 1986).

12. Following is Ahmed Yassin’s testimony regarding the circumstances of the establishment of the Islamic Society (al-Jam’iya al-Islamiya) in the Gaza Strip in 1976, a society that was identified with the Muslim Brothers and was to become one of the biggest Hamas societies in the Palestinian Territories: “In the beginning we found that the youth like to carry out sport [activities] in their leisure hours, and understandably we founded an Islamic society in al-Shati [refugees camp], most of whose legal clause and regulations [concerned matters like] sports and religious, moral and human education. . . . The society’s residence was in a mosque, a room in the mosque in which we were meeting and from which we were going outside . . .” (Mansur, 2003, pp. 84–85).

13. The Shi‘ite Muslims ascribe great importance also to another tax mentioned in the Qur’an and called Khoms (literally, fifth, and indeed this is its rate).

14. Sadaqa is voluntary giving, warmly recommended in the Qur’an and the Hadith for every Muslim, not taking into account his or her economic condition. The range of activities considered Sadaqa is enormous, from a donation of even one coin or fruit by a poor person to donations and voluntary assistance given to the community by mosques and schools. However, the separation between Zakat and Sadaqa is not always totally clear.

15. The basic meaning of the term *Jihad* is the struggle of Muslims against infidels in the name of Allah. However, this term includes larger meanings that have been analyzed by Muslim scholars throughout the generations: Jihad in the Qur’an, whose meaning is the debate and the preaching (Da’wa) for Islam; Jihad al-Nafs (“the soul Jihad”), which means the moral and internal strains of every Muslim to avoid evil and to stick to the virtues ordered by Allah; and Jihad bil-Mal (the economic Jihad, Jihad using financial means), which means giving donations for needy Muslims as well as for Jihad warriors. As was written in the Qur’an: “March forth whether you be light or heavy, and exert your utmost in Allah’s way with your possessions and your lives: this is the best for you, if you but know it” (The Holy Qur’an, 2003, *Surah* 9, verse 41). To these types of Jihad can be added also al-Jihad bil-Lisan (“Jihad of the tongue”) and al-Jihad bil-Qalam (“Jihad using a pen”), which means exhorting for Jihad (Halevi, 2005).
16. These committees are called Zakat committees even though they are responsible mainly for
distributing financial or material assistance to the needy and not for collecting donations in
order to finance these activities. Collecting the donations is coordinated through Islamic
foundations around the world, and especially in the Persian Gulf states (the population in the
West Bank and the Gaza Strip is too poor to donate for these causes; most of Hamas’s budget
originates abroad).

17. The Islamic University of Gaza (http://www.iugaza.edu.ps) and the Polytechnic University of
Hebron (http://www.ppu.edu) are identified with, but do not totally belong to, Hamas.

18. Such as the al-Razi hospital in Jenin, operated by Hamas’s local charity committee.

19. As of this printing, this domain no longer exists; Hamas’s charity committees (as well as
Hizballah’s civilian institutions) sometimes change their Internet domains, perhaps because
of Israeli restraints or as a cautious preliminary move.

20. Similar activities are run by Hamas’s other committees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip,
including the al-Salah Islamic Association (http://www.alsalah.org) in Gaza; the Islamic
Society (http://www.isocg.ps; http://www.islamso.org), which operates branches in the Gaza
64–78); the Bethlehem al-Islah committee (http://web.archive.org/web/20071009215111/
http://www.islahbethlehem.com/); and many others.

21. In addition, Hizballah is building nonformal educational systems and activities beyond school
hours; the organization is especially proud of its youth movement, the Imam al-Mahdi
published by the Scouts movement in 2006, it had about 42,000 boys and girls organized in 499
groups. The Al-Mahdi Scouts’ activity focuses especially on the social field (games, competi-
tions, journeys, sports activities, and summer camps) and the educational-propaganda one
(assimilation of the Iranian Islamic revolution’s principles and Hizballah’s values).

22. It is genuinely difficult to estimate terrorist organizations’ budgets because of the fact that they
do not reveal this information. Moreover, estimates may vary significantly in light of the fact
that some estimates include components excluded by others (such as nonterrorist activities of
the organizations). In Hizballah, this mission is twice as complicated because of uncertainty
regarding the amount of funds derived from its secondary sources, in addition to the apparent
tendency of some estimates to include the considerable number of military equipment
Hizballah receives from Iran as part of the organization’s budget.

23. Thus, Hamas’s fund in Germany (named al-Aqsa) and some of its branches (i.e., in the
Netherlands) were shut down, while other Hamas funds, like in the United Kingdom
(Interal—Helping Palestinians in need; http://www.interpal.org) or France (Comité de
Bienfaisance et de Secours aux Palestiniens [Committee for Charity and Support for the
Palestinians; CBSP]; http://www.cbsp.fr), still operate.

24. Such as the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (http://www.wamy.org) or the International
Islamic Relief Organization (http://www.egatha.org), both based in Saudi Arabia.

25. Hamas runs a few commercial projects only, of which the most prominent are the Ramallah-
based Beit al-Mal investment company and its subordinate, the al-Aqsa Bank. These two
Islamic institutions are expected to operate according to the Shari’a (Islamic law). And
apparently, their profits are very small, if any (Feiler, 1999, pp. 24–26).

26. See note no. 22.

27. Thus, Hizballah’s leadership keeps participating as honored guests in official events conducted
by Hizballah’s social-civilian institutions. For instance, in November 2001, Hizballah’s
leader, Hassan Nasrallah, participated in an iftar meal (for breaking the Ramadan fast) hosted
by The Islamic Imdad Charitable Committee. Nasrallah made use of this platform to praise in his speech alms giving and helping those in need, to criticize the Lebanese government’s lack of social activity, and to glorify Imdad’s work in this field (Elias, 2006, Vol. 9, pp. 123–131). Another example is Nasrallah’s participation in a Jihad al-Bina event in February 2003, a religious-educational center’s cornerstone ceremony. In the speech he delivered at this event, Nasrallah stated that “building mosques and educational and cultural centers is an important work of mankind and an integral part of the battle and the struggle plan, because our battle always relied, first and foremost, on faith, moral power, ideology, purity of spirit, willpower, strength of devotion and courage inspired by our great commanders, and will always do” (Elias, 2006, Vol. 10, p. 83).

28. The close connection between The Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center and the Israeli Defense Force’s (IDF) Intelligence Corps is demonstrated by the fact that it obtained Palestinian documents captured by the IDF (see later), which are the same documents Israel presented to foreign countries in order for them to clamp down on Hamas’s financial sources. Moreover, The Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center is subordinate to the Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center, an association whose members are veterans of all Israeli Intelligence organizations and whose aim is to promote the commemoration of its members. Among the IDF’s Intelligence Corps, there were those who expressed their resistance to the corps’ use of the Information Center as a channel to disseminate information with which the IDF does not want to be directly identified (as part of what the Information Center itself calls “the battle for hearts and minds”). The opponents among the Intelligence Corps stress that military intelligence should have no connection with an information center that, they assert, deals primarily with propaganda instead of providing objective and impartial professional analyses having no political or ideological bias (Fishman, 2007; Milman, 2007). See also note no. 35.

29. Such as the former U.S. Treasury Department analyst Dr. Matthew Levitt, whose somewhat tendentious book is mentioned in note no. 35.

30. For example, Israeli soldiers found in the office of the principal’s orphans school in Dura (a branch of the Hebron Islamic Society) various incitement materials, such as framed photos of Hamas’s and Palestinian Islamic Jihad’s Shahids (the organizations’ dead cadres) from the Hebron district. They also found elementary school orphans’ handicrafts that supported suicide attacks and the Shahids in order to glorify them and turn them into models for imitation (Intelligence & Terrorism Information Center, 2004a).

31. Like Jamal Muhammad Farah al-Tawil, who founded the al-Islah Charitable Society in Ramallah-al-Bireh (identified with Hamas) and was its chairman until he was arrested by Israel in April 2002. In his interrogation, Tawil admitted that the society had served as a legal cover for his activity in the Hamas’s prisoners committee after the PA refused to give this committee a certificate of approval to operate. He also admitted to being in contact with Hamas’s senior activists, some of whom were military operatives; he was also accused of being in contact with Khaled Masha’il, the head of Hamas’s political bureau in Syria (Intelligence & Terrorism Information Center, 2004b, Part II, pp. 25–26). This publication deals with Interpal, Hamas’s fund in London, and the charities in the Palestinian Territories.


33. See a quotation of the chairman of the Ramallah Zakat Committee, which is identified with Hamas: “We do not ask how the death happened, but only ask for the death certificate; the social worker decides, based on the family’s needs, [on] assistance. We have 100 sponsored
children whose fathers have been killed for collaborating with the occupation. This does not concern us" (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2003, p. 24).

34. There are also those who lessen the importance of the incitement in Hamas’s educational institutions as a lever for fanning hatred of Israel and encouraging military attacks. A PA officer has expressed himself in the same vein, saying that “the pupils are not in need of incitement; the daily practices of the occupation and what these pupils see with their own eyes is more than sufficient for this purpose.” And a similar message was expressed by a secular NGO activist, saying that “children are not being told anything they don't already know and do not experience everywhere else” (ICG, 2003, p. 22).

35. See in this context the sharp criticism that has been leveled by Steven Erlanger, the Jerusalem bureau chief of the International Herald Tribune, against the researcher Matthew Levitt’s (2006) book on Hamas. In his column, Erlanger sharply attacked Levitt’s book, which claims a tight connection between Hamas’s Da’wa apparatus and its military wing, and accused Levitt of “heavily depending on analyses from the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center . . . , an Israeli nongovernmental organization created ‘in memory of the fallen of the Israeli intelligence community’ and staffed by its former employees. . . . None of this would matter if Levitt used the center’s analyses critically, but he does not appear to. As a result, there will be readers of this book who will see it as fronting for the Israeli intelligence establishment and its views . . . .” (Erlanger, 2006).

36. See http://web.archive.org/web/20110723060831/http://www.jihadbinaa2006.org/. In comparison, the American aid for the renovation of Lebanon after the war reached about $230 million, to which another assistance-budget for economic and security goals, $770 million, was added (see http://www.usaid.gov/lb/programs/rebuilding.html).

37. In the same vein, one of Hamas’s senior members, Mahmud al-Rumahi, has stated, “Yes, they [Hamas’ social activities] have a big role, they are responsible to a large extent for the results we have achieved . . . they are responsible . . . the main responsible” (Ware, 2006).

38. In the past few years, following Hamas’s electoral victory and its taking over the Gaza Strip, the PA increased its supervision over Hamas’s social-civilian institutions in the West Bank (in addition to efforts made against Hamas’s military cells). The PA also tried to replace the board of directors of these institutions with its own supporters, thus attempting to lessen their linkage to Hamas (shutting them down is usually not an option because of their humanitarian role). Until now there has been no clear evidence of an impressive success of the PA’s initiative.

39. As claimed in an FBI report that dealt with a conference held by Hamas on October 1993 in Philadelphia, in which the movement denied using Western funds (like British Interpal or American Holy Land Foundation [HLF]) belonging to Hamas in order to avoid media criticism and negative public image. This FBI report was one of the exhibits in the trial held against senior HLF members (“USA v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development”) in the USA Northern District of Texas’s Court: http://www.txnd.uscourts.gov/judges/hlf2.html

40. For example, The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)’s 2005 annual budget was summed up by more than $160 million (and $246 million during 2007), and the PA’s 2004 social services budget amounted to more than $520 million (while Hamas’s total annual budget was estimated at around $70 million, most of it dedicated to the Da’wa). http://www.un.org/unrwa/emergency/appeals/2007-appeal.pdf

41. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (http://www.unrwa.org/).
42. United States Agency for International Development (http://www.usaid.gov/).
43. Also the activity of the foreign aid organizations, especially UNRWA, is often considered, especially by Palestinian refugees, not as a good-will donation but as a fulfillment of a legal commitment of the UN and its member states by virtue of their apparent responsibility for the continuation of the refugees’ problem and their poor conditions.
44. These spiritual needs, which are based on deep feelings of Islamic pride and a belonging to a worldwide Islamic community, have been well demonstrated by Yasmina Khadra (the pen name of the Algerian author Mohammed Moulessehoul) in his book *Wolf Dreams* (2003). His book’s main character, a frustrated unemployed young person wandering the slums of Algiers’s Kasbah, finds Islam and the Islamic community as a source of hope and spiritual uplifting:

> The call of the muezzin echoed mine, suddenly soothing my spirit. It was a moment of incredible intensity. As if by magic, my anguish was appeased, and I was filled with a sensation of deliverance. I was convinced that it was a sign from Heaven. God was talking to me through the muezzin. There was no doubt about it. Salvation had knocked on my window . . . [Then] I joined the faithful in prayer at the mosque. A few neighbors, pleasantly surprised to find me among them, nodded in greeting. A hand tapped me on the shoulder, another brushed mine. I was no longer alone. A world was coming to life around me, protecting me already, [and] delivering me from my fears. . . . The torments of the night faded as I left surrounded by my people. I could at last stand up without faltering, prostrate myself without collapsing, and close my eyes without encountering the devastating horror of nightmares . . . (Khadra, 2003, pp. 70–71)

**References**


*Social–Civilian Apparatuses of Hamas and Hizbollah*


Fishman, A. (2007, November 2). We deal with the Fatah, and they become organized, arm themselves and wait (in Hebrew). *Yediot Ahranot*.


